DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 438 575 CS 510 239

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TITLE	Improving Student Academic Achievement through Enhanced Communication Skills.
PUB DATE	1999-12-00
NOTE	144p.; M.A. Research Project, Saint Xavier University.
PUB TYPE	Dissertations/Theses (040) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Achievement; Action Research; *Communication Skills; Conflict Resolution; Cooperative Learning; Emotional Development; *Instructional Effectiveness; *Interpersonal Competence; *Listening; *Listening Skills; Primary Education

ABSTRACT

This report describes a program implemented to improve inadequate student communication skills, specifically in the areas of listening, speaking, social, and emotional development. The targeted population consisted of first and second grade students in a middle class community, located in central Illinois. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes a survey of teachers' perceptions of students communication skills, students' writing skills samples, teacher journals of students' social and emotional skills, and Iowa Test of Basic Skills listening scores. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that communication issues can be broken down into four categories that include societal issues, family issues, curricular issues, and instructional issues. Within the society, there are many different negative factors affecting children and their development of communication skills. Poor family guidance and support are also hindering these skills. Over-loaded curriculums need to be revised to include communication goals. Within the classroom there is little explicit instruction of listening and speaking skills, as well as social and emotional skills. A review of the solution strategies suggested by the professional literature and an analysis of the problem resulted in the development of a four-step intervention process. This intervention includes activities that develop the skills of listening and speaking, social and emotional interaction, cooperative learning, and conflict resolution. With these interventions, communication skills and academic achievement improved. Postintervention data indicated an increase in the students' communication skills, specifically in the areas of listening, speaking, social, and emotional development. Post-intervention data also indicated that the students' cooperative learning and conflict resolution skills improved as a result of increased communication skills. Contains 47 references, and 14 tables and 14 figures of data. Appendixes contain survey instruments, checklists, listening activities, social skills activities, emotional skills activities, cooperative activities, classroom setups, and conflict resolution activities. (Author/RS)

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ED 438 575

IMPROVING STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH ENHANCED COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & SkyLight Professional Development

Field-Based Masters Program

Chicago, Illinois

December, 1999

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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program implemented to improve inadequate student communication skills, specifically in the areas of listening, speaking, social, and emotional development. The targeted population consisted of first and second grade students in a middle class community, located in central Illinois. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes a survey of teachers' perceptions of students communication skills, students' writing skills samples, teacher journals of students' social and emotional skills, and Iowa Test of Basic Skills listening scores.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that communication issues can be broken down into four categories that include societal issues, family issues, curricular issues, and instructional issues. Within the society, there are many different negative factors affecting children and their development of communication skills. Poor family guidance and support are also hindering these skills. Over-loaded curriculums need to be revised to include communication goals. Within the classroom there is little explicit instruction of listening and speaking skills, as well as social and emotional skills.

A review of the solution strategies suggested by the professional literature and an analysis of the problem resulted in the development of a four-step intervention process. This intervention includes activities that develop the skills of listening and speaking, social and emotional interaction, cooperative learning, and conflict resolution. With these interventions, communication skills and academic achievement improved.

Postintervention data indicated an increase in the students' communication skills, specifically in the areas of listening, speaking, social, and emotional development. Postintervention data also indicated that the students' cooperative learning and conflict resolution skills improved as a result of increased communication skills.

DEDICATION

Our Action Research Project is dedicated to our families, friends, and colleagues who supported and encouraged us. Special thanks is extended to our typist and to our computer assistants for all of their help. We would like to express our sincere appreciation to our principal, teachers, and professor for their guidance. Finally, we would like to thank our students for their inspiration and cooperation.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The targeted students are first and second grade students. The first grade is a regular division classroom. The second grade is a regular division classroom that includes students who are physically disabled. These targeted students exhibit inadequate communication skills that interfere with academic growth and performance. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes teacher anecdotal records, journal entries, classroom observations, and assessments of student academic achievement and performance.

Immediate Problem Context

The school is a one-story red brick building with a circular wing containing grades prekindergarten through fourth with a total enrollment of 476 students. The ethnic makeup of the school population is 61.6% Caucasian, 36.6% African-American, 1.1% Hispanic, and 0.8% Asian-Pacific Islander. Within the total population, 0.6% have limited English proficiency.

Of the school's population of 476 students, 50.2% come from low-income households. The community is in a socioeconomic decline causing an increase in the number of low-income students attending this school. The school is qualified to receive special state money through the Title I fund. However, the

incomes of the target school and a neighboring parochial school are combined in the state's evaluation for funding. Therefore, the combined income of these two schools is too high to make the target school eligible for any Title I funding.

The school takes in students from an enclave. Students from one of the three low-income housing projects are bused to the school. Seven buses transport the majority of the students with the exception of the special education students. These students are transported by vans, cars, and small specially equipped buses.

The school has an average daily attendance rate of 94.5%. The student mobility rate is 23.8%, and there is a 2.8% chronic truancy rate.

The school has a total of 52 staff members. This number includes teachers, teacher assistants, and support staff. The staff members are all female and 99% Caucasian.

The school's population and its program are quite unique. The school site is the only primary school that accommodates students with physical disabilities. These students are drawn from the local urban area and 13 surrounding counties. The school works in conjunction with a special education association to facilitate the needs of these students. The school also serves students who have emotional and mental handicaps and learning disabilities.

The school has five grade levels. The prekindergarten is made up of one special education classroom. The average class size is 10.0 students. Typically, there are three sections at

each grade level, kindergarten through fourth. Usually, each of grade level classrooms are classified according to regular division and special education. One classroom may be a self-contained, regular division class. One regular division classroom may include students who are physically disabled. Another regular division classroom may include students with learning disabilities. There are two self-contained classrooms for students who are educable mentally handicapped. The average class sizes are 23.3 in kindergarten, 26.7 in first grade, 20.0 in second grade, 20.8 in third grade, and 20.0 in fourth grade (School Report Card, 1997).

There are also specialized classrooms located in the circular wing of the school. These classrooms service students who have severe and profound multiple disabilities. These students receive special services such as physical therapy and occupational therapy.

The curriculum includes the subjects of mathematics, science, English, and social science. English includes all language arts courses. Students also receive instruction in art, music, physical education, and computers. The language arts component of the curriculum is supported by a program in phonemic awareness.

The school is part of a large urban district comprised of 32 schools. Within the district there are 14 primary schools, 12 middle schools, and 4 high schools. There is also a middle school for gifted students and a K-8 magnet school for the arts.

The elementary pupil-teacher ratio is 21.8:1. The operating expenditure per pupil is $6,175.

The district staff of 1,015 teachers has a gender breakdown of 76% female and 24% male. Racial and ethnic backgrounds are 91.9% Caucasian, 7.4% African-American, 0.4% Hispanic, and 0.3% Asian-Pacific Islander.

The average years of teacher experience are 15.1 years. The percentage of faculty members with a bachelor's degree is 55.3%, and the percentage with a master's degree or above is 44.6%. The average teacher salary is $36,536.

The school district spends 76.3% of its income on instruction. It also spends 10.2% on operations and maintenance, 3.6 on transportation, 1.4% on bond and interest, 5.2% on rent, 2.9% on municipal retirement and social security, and 0.4% on fire prevention and safety. The total operating expenditure for the year is $100,852,404 (School Report Card, 1997).

Community Setting

The school is in the center of a midwestern city located midway between two of the nation's largest urban areas. The city, located on a major river, has a land area of 44 square miles.

The city was founded in 1673 by European settlers. This was one of the earliest settlements and has deep historical roots. Over 12,000 years ago, Native Americans chose this area to inhabit. One of the first automobiles was built here in 1898. Many sites retain the atmosphere of this area's rich heritage (The Area Visitors' Guide, 1998).

The neighborhood surrounding the school consists of single family homes and three churches. The neighborhood is mostly made up of middle class families. There are 71,400 households within the community, and the median income is $34,382. The median sales price of a single family home is $77,300.

There are approximately 111,400 people living in the community. The ethnic make up is 67.7% Caucasian, 24.9% African-American, 4.3% Hispanic, and 3.1% Asian-Pacific Islander. The average age is 35.9 years.

Within the population, 88.2% are high school graduates. Of the adult population, 27.1% have completed one to three years of college, 12.8% have completed four years of college, and 6.6% have completed five or more years of college. There is one private university and six local colleges. The majority of these are medical and nursing colleges.

The labor force of the community is made up of 178,475 individuals. These individuals are 55% white-collar workers and 45% blue-collar workers. The unemployment rate is 5.0%. For all ages, the number of people who fall below the poverty level is 25,663. This is 14.5% of the total population (Annual Report of the City, 1998; Department of State Employment Security, 1998; Economic Department Council, 1998).

The major economic industrial sectors are agriculture, manufacturing, and information technologies. The city serves as the headquarters of one of the largest international construction equipment manufacturers. The other major employers are two

medical centers, the public school system, a steel and wire company, and an international automobile company.

The health care services of the city include three hospitals. One hospital houses a major state trauma center. Another local hospital has a center that specializes in teaching health and life education to the general population.

There is a wide variety of commercial and public transportation services in the area. These services include local and national bus lines and railroads. There is one major regional airport and one municipal airport. With the city's location on a major river, there are many boating services and barge lines. There is more barge traffic in and out of the area than the Suez Canal.

The community offers a variety of cultural and recreational activities. There are five museums, nine theaters, and a major civic center that hosts a wide variety of local events. There are 5 libraries, 41 parks, 7 golf courses, 5 public swimming pools, 7 health clubs, and 16 shopping centers. The city has one minor league hockey team, one minor league baseball team, and a NCAA Division I basketball team associated with the private university.

The community is currently growing in many areas. An educational technology center is being built downtown. Restaurants, a health complex, and an outdoor musical amphitheater are presently in development on the city's ever-growing riverfront. Many churches in the area represent a variety of

religious faiths (Annual Report of the City, 1998; Publication of the City Newspaper's Marketing Department).

National Context of the Problem

The problem of inadequate communication exists not only within the target school but also nationally in our country's schools. With inadequate communication skills, academic growth and performance is negatively affected. According to the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, 1998, the nationally-based norm for the first grade listening skills is 35 (Iowa Test of Basic Skills, 1998). The test publisher also states that listening is often cited as a "neglected area" of primary education. Good listening skills are an important part of successful communication.

Communication can be defined as the combination of listening and speaking skills as well as the social and emotional skills that support the communication process. The expressive skills most used by humans are speaking and writing. The receptive skills are listening and reading (Gearheart et al., 1992). Students need effective communication skills to perform well academically. According to the article "Get Ready for School/ What Does It Mean", there is no one quality or skill that children need to do well in school, but a combination of things contributes to success. These include good health and physical well-being, social and emotional maturity, language skills, an ability to solve problems creatively, and general knowledge about the world (Learning Begins Early, 1998; Publication of the Department of Education).

Listening has been shown to be the most frequent communication activity. Students desperately need listening training, but the educational system usually ignores listening skills (Newton, 1998). Listening is not a school subject like reading and writing. Many believe it comes naturally. According to Smith (1998);

> The latest studies reveal that listening is a very large part of school learning and is one of our primary means of interacting with other people on a personal basis. It is estimated that between 50 and 75 percent of students' classroom time is spent listening to the teacher, to other students, and to audio media. (p. 1)

It has been found that students can be taught to improve their listening skills, and this will increase their achievement ("What Works: Listening Skills", 1998).

Since the introduction of computers, an expression "rubbish in, rubbish out" has been voiced. It means if you don't put in the right information, don't blame the computer for making mistakes. The same may be applied to communication. If good communication skills are not explicitly taught and developed when children are young, they cannot be expected to communicate well as adults.

Although schools spend very little time developing listening skills, educators do know that students listen more than they speak, read, or write. When students attentively listen, they are better able to function and communicate with others (Friedman, 1986). In conjunction with developing communication

skills, schools need to attend systematically to students' social and emotional skills. When the academic achievement of children increases, the incidence of problem behaviors decreases, and the quality of the relationships surrounding each child improves (Elias et al., 1997).

Students who do not process information clearly through their minds and do not learn to communicate accurately will experience difficulties with thinking. Unless something is done to radically improve their listening skills, cognitive skills, and language skills, development will be slowed down. In the longer term, this often leads to problems with reading and spelling. There may even be difficulties with dyslexia. Children who are struggling with learning and communication often develop secondary emotional and social problems such as extreme shyness, aggressiveness, hyper-activity, or even ADD-attention deficit disorder (Brooks, 1998).

Students learn so much through the process of communication. It is widely assumed that learners receive so much daily practice in communication that formal training is unnecessary. This may be incorrect. Without direct communication instruction in the elementary years, many adults have inadequate communication skills. Too many adults do not perceive much spoken stimuli around them. Some fail to process it accurately, and many more fail to remember what they have heard. Therefore, many corporations have had to institute programs that build better communication skills ("What Works: Listening Skills", 1998).

To communicate, we exchange thoughts, opinions, and information. We do this by using our listening and speaking skills as well as our social and emotional skills. In the 1994 book Life 101: Everything We Wish We Had Learned About Life in School But Didn't, author Peter McWilliams (1994, p. 303) states his communication philosophy well. "The combination of successful communication - the sharing of thoughts - and physical action can, literally, move mountains."

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document and assess the communication skills of the targeted first and second grade students, several data collection methods were used. The data collection methods included: a survey of teachers' perceptions of students' communication skills, observation checklists of student communication skills, samples of students' writing skills, teachers' journals of students' social and emotional skills, and students' Iowa Test of Basic Skills listening scores.

A survey of teachers' perceptions of students' communication skills was given to teachers of grades kindergarten through fourth, including teachers of special education classes for first/second and third/fourth levels. The survey was developed by the teacher/researchers (Appendix A). Teachers were asked to indicate the number of students who exhibited adequate skills in the following areas: listening, speaking, writing, social, and emotional. Of the 19 surveys distributed, 17 were returned and used. A summary of the teachers' perceptions of students' communication skills is presented in table one.

Table 1

Teacher Responses on the Percentage of Students Demonstrating Adequate Communication Skills; January 19, 1999 Through January 25, 1999

	Listening Skills	Speaking Skills	Writing Skills	Social Skills	Emotional Skills
Kindergarten (N=68)	49%	66%	57%	76%	75%
First grade (N=88)	68%	69%	66%	80%	74%
Second grade (N=76)	58%	61%	66%	66%	67%
Third grade (N=54)	63%	81%	43%	70%	78%
Fourth grade (N=66)	45%	64%	56%	72%	64%
First/Sec. Sp. Ed. (N=11)	36%	36%	18%	73%	64%
Third/Fourth Sp. Ed. (N=10)	50%	30%	0%	70%	30%

The teachers of grades kindergarten, fourth, first/second special education, and third/fourth special education reported that half or fewer than half of their students exhibited adequate listening skills. The first/second and third/fourth special education teachers indicated that approximately one-third of their students have adequate speaking skills. Writing skills were especially problematic in the third grade and first/second special education classes. The third/fourth special education teacher stated that none of her students have adequate writing skills. Social skills deficits were the least problematic, with the percentage of students having problems ranging from 20% to 33%. The third/fourth special education teacher indicated that

70% of her students failed to demonstrate adequate emotional skills. The other grade level teachers indicated that deficits in emotional skills were present in one-third to one-fourth of the students.

The survey was given at the midpoint of the school year. The teacher/researchers concluded that the area of listening skills was the weakest. It is suggested in figure 1 that all skills are inadequate for at least 20% of the population. As might be expected, deficits in listening, speaking, and writing are especially prevalent in the special education classes. These areas (listening, speaking, and writing) also show the greatest deficits in the regular education setting, although the percentage of students with inadequacies is lesser. The data are illustrated in figure 1.

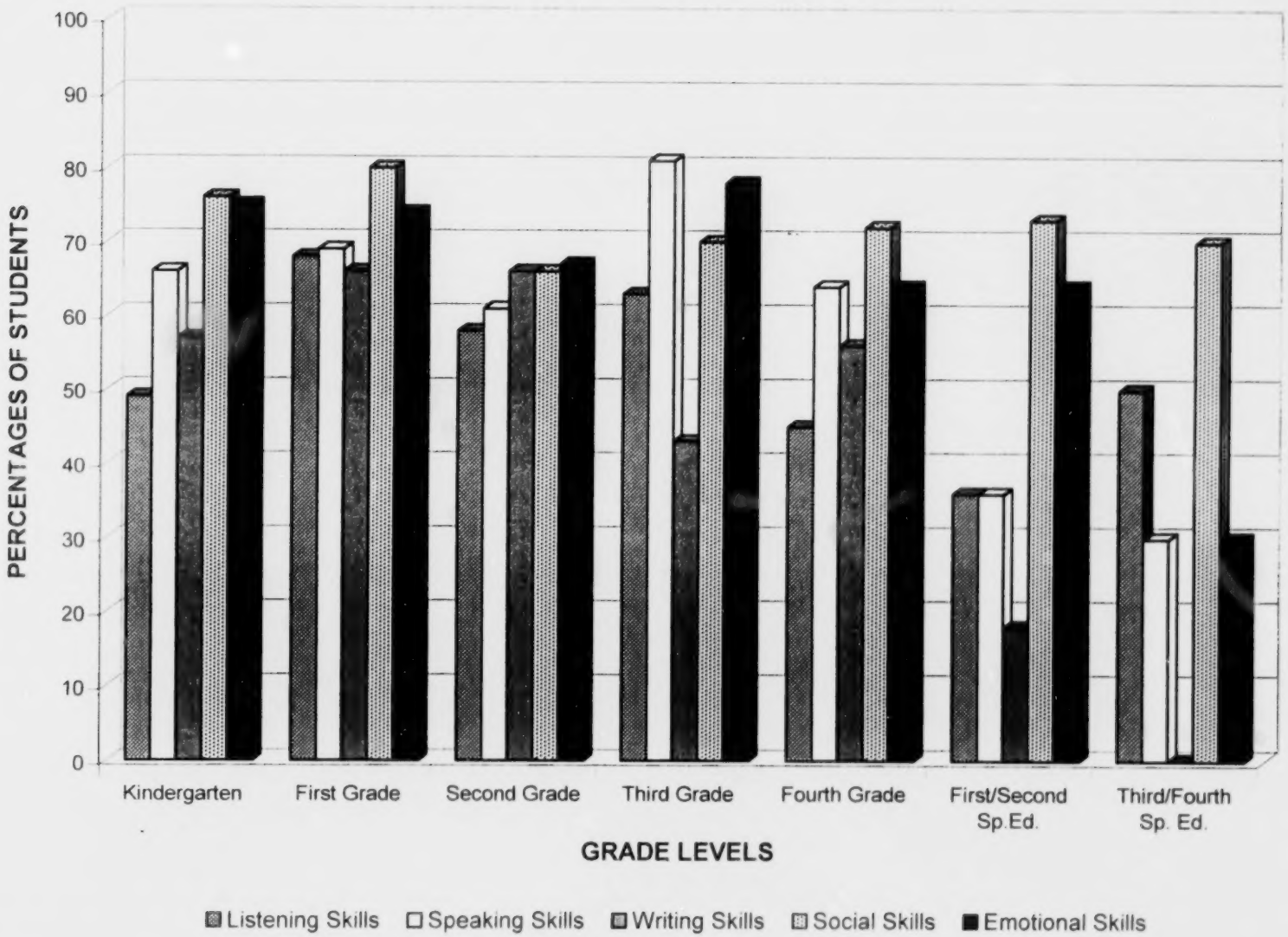

Figure 1. Grade levels and percentages of students' communication skills for the targeted school during January 1999.

The observation checklists were used to gather data about the communication skills of the targeted first and second grade students. Each student was observed twice during a two-week period from January 25 through February 5, 1999. At the end of the day the student was assigned a rating of *frequently, sometimes,* or *rarely*. Approximately five students were observed at any given time. The observation checklists were developed by the teacher/researchers (Appendix B). A summary of the ratings of observable behaviors for the first grade students is presented in table two.

Table 2

Number of First Grade Students Exhibiting Observed Behaviors (Two Observations Each): January 25, 1999 Through February 5, 1999

	Eye Contact	Quiet Body & Mouth	Response to Cues	Clear Speech	Positive Social Interaction	Participation
Rarely	11	12	8	7	6	11
Sometimes	15	10	16	16	17	14
Frequently	16	20	18	19	19	17

N=42

The teacher/researcher, who gathered data about the communication skills of the first grade students, observed a low number of students with adequate communication skills. Over the two-week period, 42 ratings were possible, given that each student of the 21 was observed twice. In all cases, fewer than 50% of the students *frequently* exhibited the behavior sought. The behaviors of positive social interaction, clear speech, and response to cues had the most frequent ratings. These ratings are illustrated in figure 2.

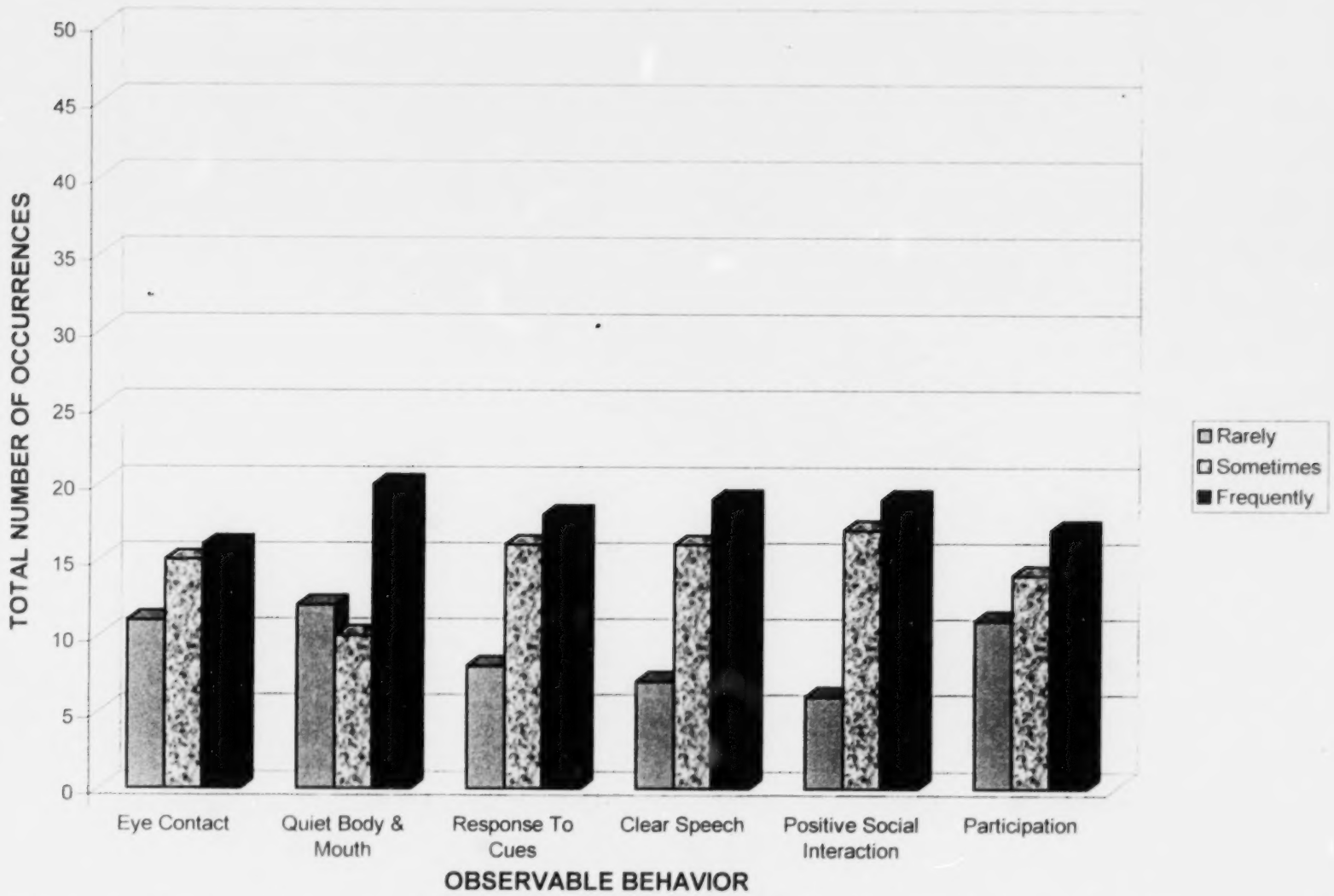

Figure 2. The total number of occurrences of first grade students' communication skills in each category during January 25 through February 5, 1999.

N=42

A summary of the ratings of observable behaviors for the second grade students is presented in table three.

Table 3

Number of Second Grade Students Exhibiting Observed Behaviors (Two Observations Each): January 25, 1999 Through February 5, 1999

	Eye Contact	Quiet Body & Mouth	Response to Cues	Clear Speech	Positive Social Interaction	Participation
Rarely	27	24	22	26	25	32
Sometimes	20	15	25	17	17	18
Frequently	5	13	5	9	10	2

N=52

The teacher/researcher, who gathered data about the communication skills of the second grade students, observed a low number of students with adequate communication skills. Over the two-week period, 52 ratings were possible, given that each student of the 26 was observed twice. In all cases, fewer than 67% of the students *frequently* exhibited the behaviors sought. The behaviors of response to cues, quiet body and mouth, and positive social interaction had the most frequent low ratings.

The teacher/researcher concluded that the second grade students' communication skills had low rates of occurrence. These ratings are illustrated in figure 3.

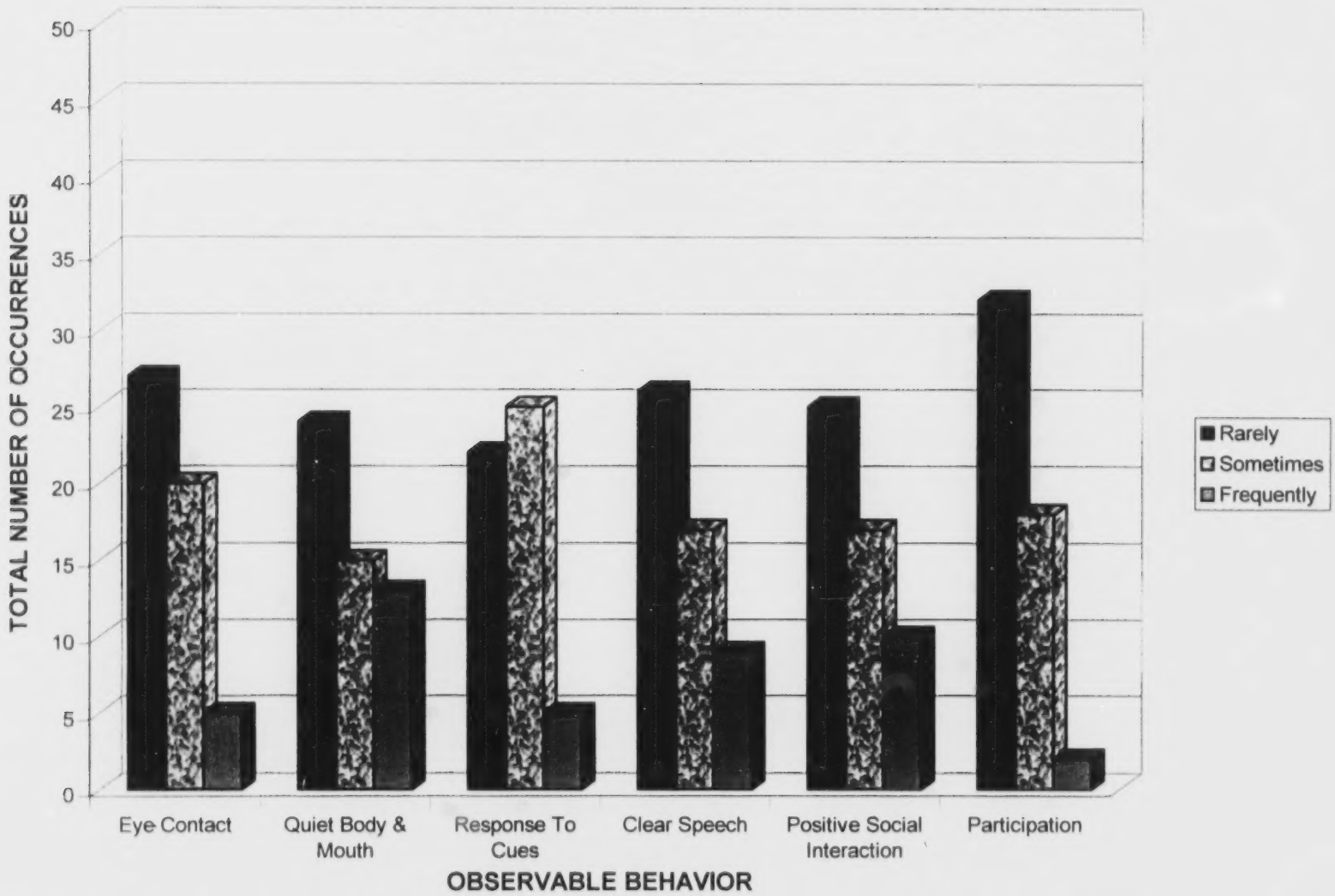

Figure 3. The total number of occurrences of second grade students' communication skills in each category during January 25 through February 5, 1999.

N=52

The teacher/researchers collected and assessed writing samples of their targeted first and second grade students. The first grade students wrote three descriptive sentences about a given picture. The second grade students wrote expository sentences about steps for a recipe. Both teacher/researchers used the same rubric to assess their students' writing skills (Appendix C). Summaries of the students' writing skills are presented in two different forms for each grade level. Figures 4 and 6 illustrate the percentage of students who were able to meet from zero to all six criteria.

The teacher/researchers used six basic writing criteria upon which the first and second grade students' writing samples were assessed. The six criteria were complete thoughts, capitalization, ending punctuation, organization, supportive sentences, and age-appropriate spelling. Figures 5 and 7 present an item analysis indicating the number of students who were successful with each criterion.

The number of writing criteria met by the first grade students is summarized and presented in table four.

Table 4

Number of First Grade Students With Positive Responses to Writing Criteria: January 21, 1999

Number of Criteria Met	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Number of Students	1	1	0	1	3	3	9

Of the 18 first grade students who completed writing samples, six students met from zero to four of the writing criteria. Fifty percent of the students met all six of the writing criteria. The data suggest that half of the students show deficits in writing skills. This information is illustrated in figure 4.

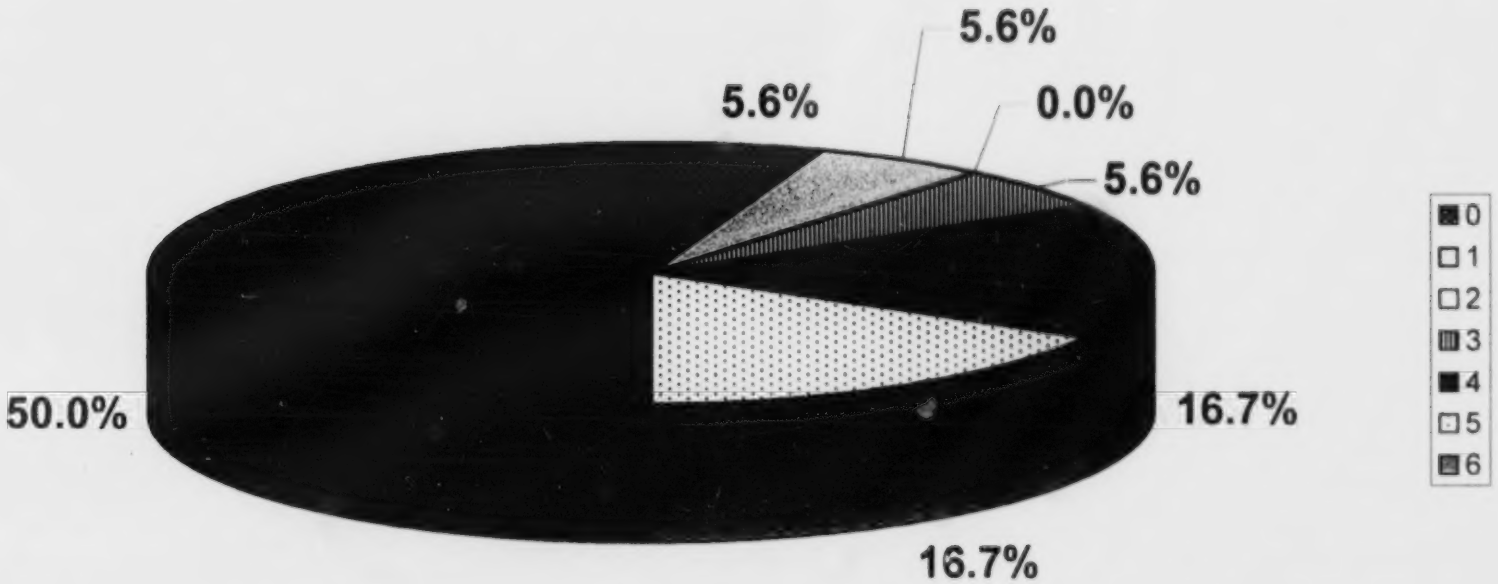

Figure 4. Percentage of first grade students meeting numbers of writing criteria on January 21, 1999.

A summary of the first grade students' specific writing skills are presented in table five.

Table 5

Specific Writing Criteria Met by the First Grade Students: January 21, 1999

	Number Successful	Number Unsuccessful
Complete Thoughts	14	4
Capitalization	16	2
Ending Punctuation	13	5
Organization	13	5
Supportive Sentences	15	3
Age-appropriate Spelling	12	6

The 18 first grade students' weakest writing skills were age-appropriate spelling, organization, and ending punctuation. Only 67% of the students had age-appropriate spelling, and 72% of the students had good organization and ending punctuation. This information is illustrated in figure 5.

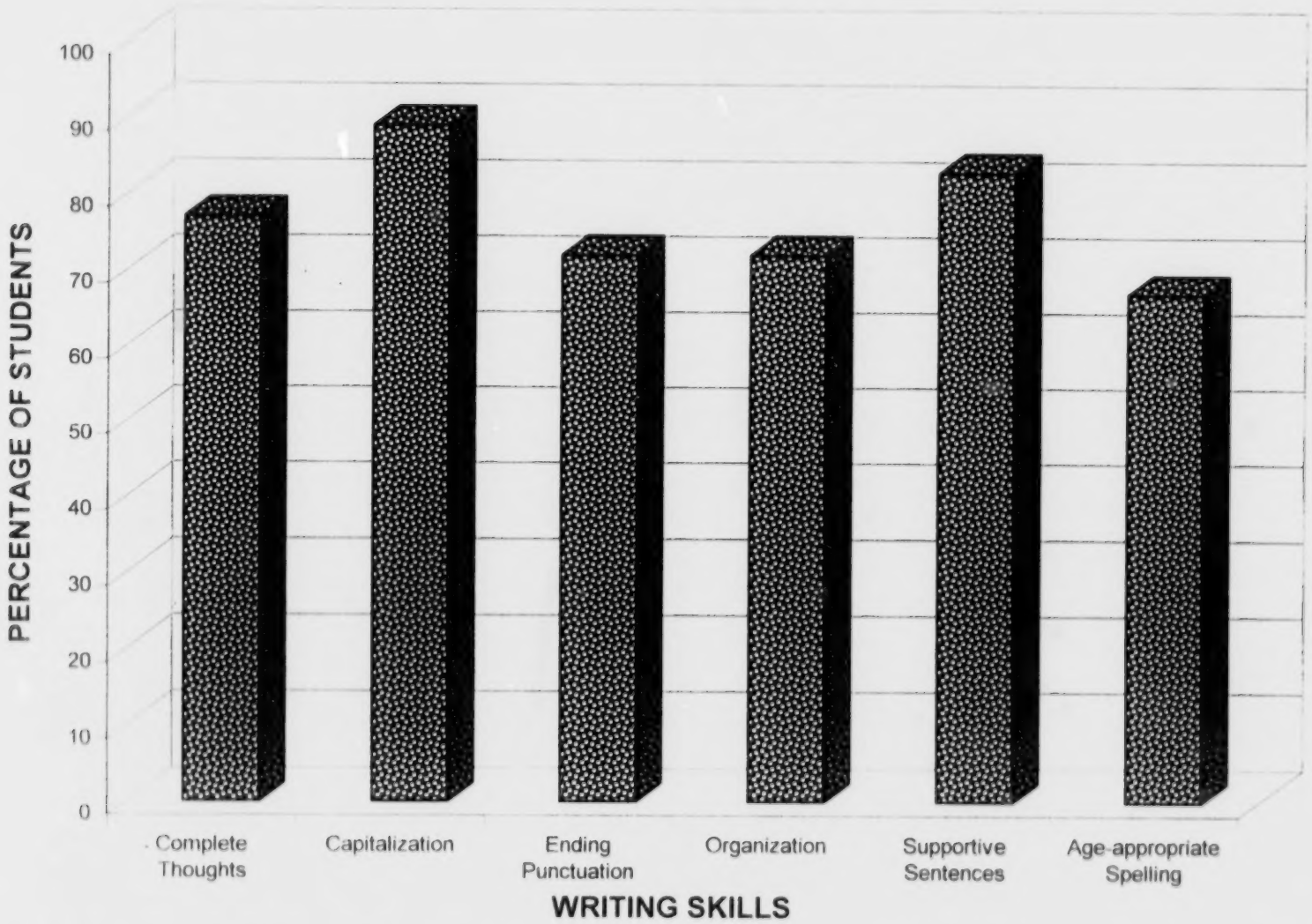

Figure 5. Percentage of first grade students meeting specific writing criteria on January 21, 1999.

The number of writing criteria met by the second grade students is summarized and presented in table six.

Table 6

Number of Second Grade Students With Positive Responses to Writing Criteria: January 22, 1999

Number of Criteria Met	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Number of Students	0	0	2	3	7	6	5

Of the 23 second grade students who completed writing samples, 12 students met four of the writing criteria. Twenty-two percent of the students met all six of the writing criteria. The data suggest that half of the students show deficits in writing skills. This information is illustrated in figure 6.

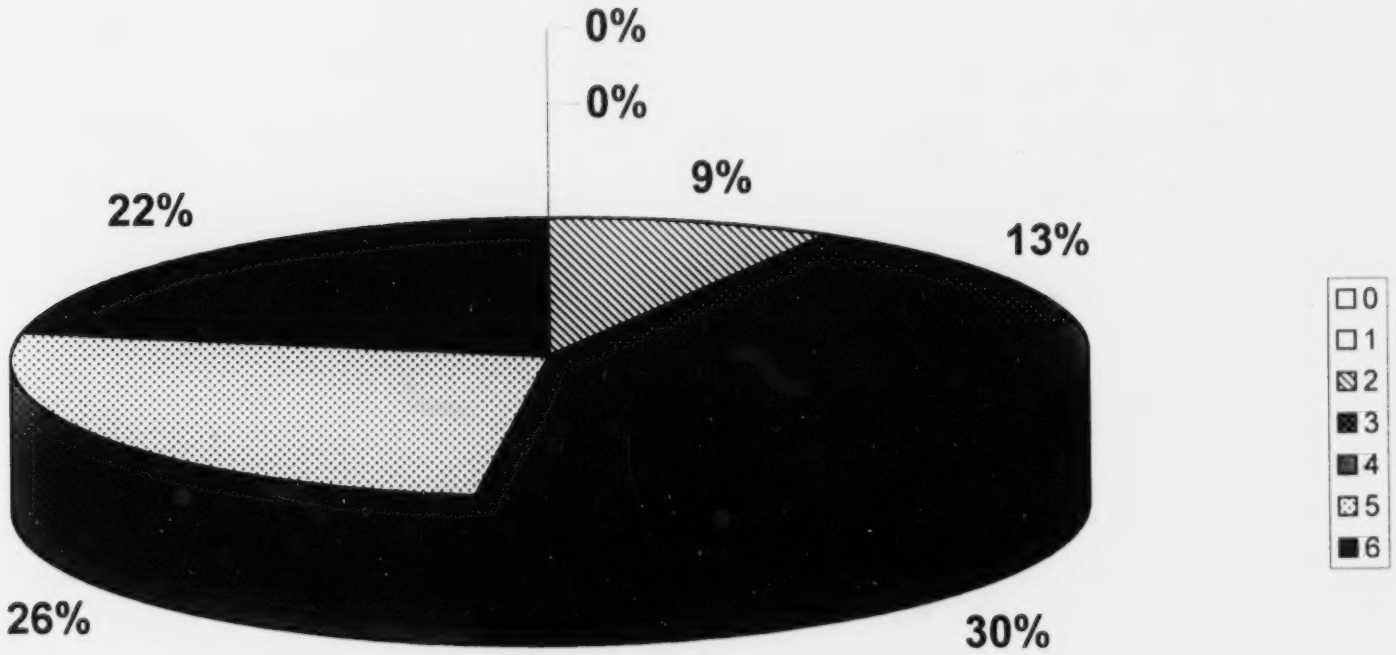

Figure 6. Percentage of second grade students meeting numbers of writing criteria on January 22, 1999.

A summary of the second grade students' specific writing skills are presented in table seven.

Table 7

Specific Writing Criteria Met by the Second Grade Students: January 22, 1999

	Number Successful	Number Unsuccessful
Complete Thoughts	16	7
Capitalization	18	5
Ending Punctuation	20	3
Organization	11	12
Supportive Sentences	17	6
Age-appropriate Spelling	19	4

The 23 second grade students' weakest writing skills were organization, complete thoughts, and supportive sentences. Only 48% of the students had good organization. Seventy percent wrote in complete thoughts, and 17 of the 23 students used supportive sentences. This information is illustrated in figure 7.

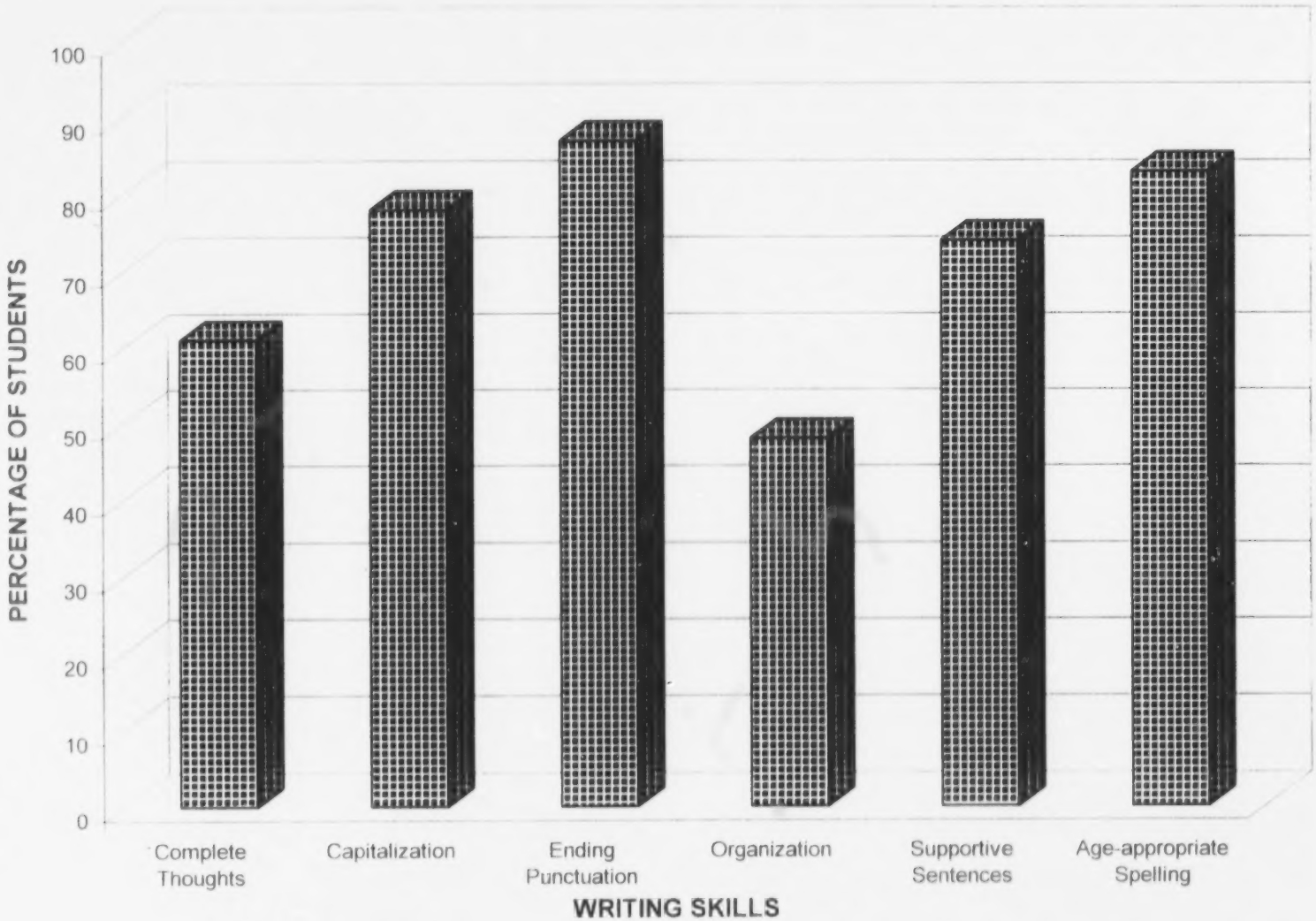

Figure 7. Percent of second grade students meeting specific writing criteria on January 22, 1999.

The Iowa Test of Basic Skills, a standardized test, was administered to the targeted second grade students in October 1998. For the purpose of analyzing communication skills, the teacher/researchers specifically focused on gathering data from the test area of listening skills. A summary of the number of students that fell within each quartile is presented in table eight.

Table 8

The Number of Second Grade Students in Each Quartile for Listening Skills: October 1998

	Q_1	Q_2	Q_3	Q_4
Listening Skills	12	4	3	5

Of the 24 students who were given the test, 50% of the students' listening scores were within the bottom quartile. An additional 17% were below the median score (50th percentile). Therefore, two-thirds of the students are performing below the 50th percentile on this nationally normed test. Only 21% of the students' listening scores were in the top quartile. This information is illustrated in figure 8.

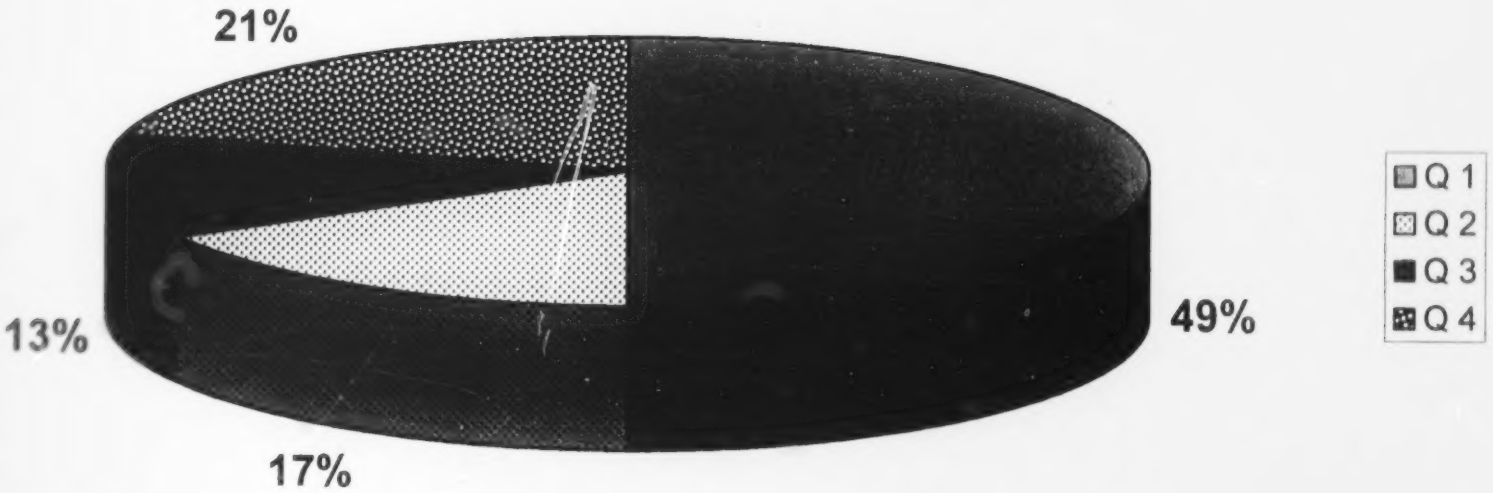

Figure 8. Percentages of the second grade students' listening scores within quartiles from October 1998.

In conclusion, all of the communication skills data from the teacher survey, the observation checklists, the writing samples, and the ITBS listening scores suggest problematic skills related to communication. Therefore, it is apparent that students' listening, speaking, social, and emotional skills are not fully developed.

Probable Causes

The literature suggests many causes for students exhibiting inadequate communication skills that interfere with their academic growth and performance. After analyzing the possible causes, both external and internal causal categories emerged: societal issues, family issues, curricular issues, and instructional issues. Young people are challenged by an increasingly difficult world. Family problems, substance abuse, economic pressures, and the lure of gangs and delinquency threaten children physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The tools required to successfully cope with these external pressures include the ability to interact with others in socially acceptable ways and make appropriate decisions in social situations (Dowd & Tierney, 1992).

Several possible causes for students exhibiting inadequate communication skills were contained within the category of societal issues. Children just are not very good at avoiding disputes. One reason they are so poor at this basic life skill, of course, is that as a society we have not bothered to make sure every child is taught the essentials of handling anger or resolving conflicts positively, nor have we bothered to teach empathy, impulse control, or any of the other fundamentals of

emotional competence. By leaving the emotional lessons children learn to chance, we risk largely wasting the window of opportunity presented by the slow maturation of the brain to help children cultivate a healthy emotional repertoire (Goleman, 1995).

According to Lantieri (1996), times are changing, and there is more chaos in our communities:

> In the United States today, every 11 seconds a child is reported abused or neglected, every 4 minutes a child is arrested for a violent crime, and every 98 minutes a child is killed by a gun. In a typical school year, more than 135,000 young people bring weapons to school because they don't feel safe. And one out of every six young people in America knows someone who was seriously hurt or killed by violence. Kids are coming to school more frightened and angry than ever before, and their fear and anger walk right through the metal detectors at the doorways. (p. 28)

In the 1996 book entitled Beyond the Classroom, author Laurence Steinberg's findings suggest that "the sorry state of American student achievement is due more to the conditions of students' lives outside of school than it is to what takes place within school walls" (p. 79). The social world is negatively affecting children and their development.

Another possible cause for students' inadequate communication skills may be poor family guidance and support. The lack of adult supervision and time spent doing constructive, cooperative activities compounds the effects of other negative influences

in the social environment for children (Garbarino, 1997). In the 1992 book Teaching Social Skills to Youth, authors Dowd & Tierney state:

> A child or adolescent who is deficient in critical social skill areas may not have had the benefit of growing up in an environment where positive social behavior was taught or reinforced. Appropriate styles of interacting with others may not have been modeled by the adults present or valued by the local peer culture or neighborhood. The child, therefore, may have not received any direct instruction in appropriate ways to get his or her immediate needs fulfilled, as is typical in most functional family settings. (p. 15)

The lack of reinforcement for important social skills may be a particularly critical feature in the learning histories of children with serious behavioral and emotional problems. These children are then more likely to act out aggressively in conflict situations at school and with peers. They may be deficient in critical social skill areas such as compliance with rules, problem-solving strategies, and communication skills (Dowd & Tierney, 1992).

Every baby develops a repertoire of sounds and syllables that imitate the language spoken in his/her world. At around age two, children go through a period of tremendous language acquisition. They can be avid listeners when it comes to learning language to navigate new social experiences (Poole, 1998). Between the ages

of one and four, many of a person's lifetime social attitudes and skills are developed (Brisbane, 1988). Through socialization in the home and community, children learn of expectations for their lives (Caruthers, 1998).

With a sense of responsibility and belonging, social skills are developed, and this contributes to emotional development. Children express their emotions openly until the age of two or three. The three-year-old begins to learn socially acceptable ways of displaying feelings (Brisbane, 1988).

As family life no longer offers growing numbers of children a sure footing in life, schools are left as the one place communities can turn to for correctives to children's deficiencies in emotional and social competence. That is not to say that schools alone can stand in for all the social institutions that too often are in or near collapse (Goleman, 1995).

Curricular issues may also cause inadequate communication skills. Author Stephen Covey states, "Communication is the most important skill in life. We spend most of our waking hours communicating." (1989) However, our school curriculums do not specifically address the skills of communication. With curriculum already besieged by a proliferation of new topics and agendas, some teachers, who understandably feel over burdened, resist taking extra time from the basics for yet another course (Goleman, 1995).

A communication goal of social and emotional competence is not being addressed in children's regular education. It should not just be taught to children who are identified as "troubled".

It must be a set of essential social and emotional skills and understandings taught to every child (Goleman, 1995). Since social and emotional skills are not explicitly being targeted, many school conflicts arise because impulsive, reckless acts escalate into aggression (Sylwester, 1997).

Far more research has focused on the cognitive, or intellectual determinants of achievement than on the emotional and social ones. When discussing students and their performance in school, educators speak in the language of ability. Instead, they should also be speaking in the language of engagement. No amount of cognitive ability will result in actual achievement if the requisite emotional characteristics that contribute to interest in school are not present (Steinberg, 1996).

Cooperation is a necessary element in the curriculum. If there is no cooperative learning, students may not improve their communication skills - listening, speaking, and writing (Bard, 1992). Though schools spend very little time developing listening skills, we do know that we listen more than we speak, read, or write. When students attentively listen, they are better able to function and communicate with others (Fusco & Fountain, 1992).

An additional curricular element that may affect communication is class size. "A number of recent studies show that parents and teachers were right all along: Smaller class size really works. In the early grades, all children learn better in classes of 15 to 17 students, and the gains are even greater for poor children in inner-city schools" (Feldman, 1998, p. 5). The research really confirms common sense. The benefits boil down

to better discipline, more individual attention for students, and better opportunities for teachers to use more varied types of instruction that engage students (Gursky, 1998).

Communication skills are at a deficit. American educators need a broader, revised vision of curricular goals that include communication skills. Educators, long disturbed by school children's lagging scores in math and reading, are realizing there is a different and more alarming deficiency. While efforts are being made to raise academic standards, this new and troubling deficiency is not being addressed in the standard school curriculum (Goleman, 1995).

Finally, instructional issues may also cause inadequate communication skills. Good communication skills need to be built by both teachers and students. If classroom relationships are not positive, student performance will be strongly affected. It is suggested that positive classroom relationships are becoming more difficult to establish as a growing cultural and social distance between students and teachers contributes to an alarming schism in instructional process (Caruthers, 1998).

Listening to a child is important. If teachers do not understand and accept what a student is saying, their communication may suffer. The way teachers speak to children can also make a difference in their behavior, their relationship with others, and their feelings about themselves (Stephens, 1996). Likewise, teacher expectations are communicated to students during teacher-student interactions. Researchers studied the ways teachers

communicate their expectations to high achievers and low achievers. Their observations of classrooms revealed that teachers treat low achievers differently than they treat high achievers (Caruthers, 1998).

Part of the classroom environment entails the teacher speaking and listening to the children. How a student perceives that environment can have a direct impact not only on their achievement but also on their personal-social behaviors. Furthermore, depressed rates of student classroom participation predict lower achievement as early as the first three grades (Caruthers, 1998).

Teachers can also affect a child's emotional development. If they do not help children identify their feelings, both positive and negative, and deal with them in appropriate ways, communication skills may suffer. Teachers must focus on "the emotional fabric of a child's life - a focus that is determinedly ignored in almost every other classroom in America" (Goleman, 1995, p. 261).

It is imperative to build good communication skills for positive classroom interaction. A single teaching episode or an isolated interaction between the teacher and a student or between a student and his or her peers can influence the student's perceptions of the learning environment and his or her motivation to achieve (Caruthers, 1998).

In conclusion, it is important to consider the possible causes for inadequate communication skills from society, family, curriculum, and classroom instruction when proposing solutions.

Economist and educational reformer Henry Levin listed communication as a goal of good school education in terms of attributes that will be needed in the work place of the next century (as cited in Berliner and Biddle, 1995).

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of Literature

Children who cannot or do not communicate well may have problems in school. Good communication skills help students understand their parents, teachers, and peers. Students must define communication and discover the techniques of good communication (Dodge & Mallard, 1992). The principle key to effective communication is "seek first to understand, then to be understood" (Covey, 1989). Students are exhibiting inadequate communication skills, specifically in the areas of listening, speaking, and social/emotional development. The literature suggests some possible solutions to the causal categories of societal issues, family issues, curricular issues, and instructional issues.

Good communication involves listening and speaking skills, plus social and emotional skills. These skills must be explicitly developed within the child's environment, which includes society, home, and school. When communication is developed, cooperation and conflict resolution skills can thrive. In turn, practicing cooperation and conflict resolution builds better communication for the student at home, in society, and at school. The optimum design for improving effective communication is to begin early, be age-appropriate, run throughout the school years, and intertwine efforts at school, at home, and in the community (Goleman, 1995).

Parents play an essential role in building children's communication skills because children spend more time with their parents than with any other adult. Adults, parents, and teachers set a powerful example of good or poor communication. Communication skills are influenced by the examples children see and hear (Smith, 1998). Adults must model good communication in order for children to be good communicators. Any caregiver must know how to communicate with children effectively (Stephens, 1996). Parents and teachers who listen to their children with interest, attention, and patience set a good example (Smith, 1998).

There are many activities adults can do to help children learn to communicate. Adults should specifically demonstrate various communication skills such as the ability to make eye contact, read body language, take turns, stay on topic, and listen. The characteristics adults should emphasize are good volume, good rate, clear speech, good timing, tone of voice, and showing interest (Dodge & Mallard, 1992). Some suggestions for improving communication with children are: avoid dead-end questions, extend conversations, share your thoughts, observe signs to end conversations, reflect feelings, and help clarify and relate experiences (Smith, 1998).

Students should have a strong awareness of the varying functions of communication, or more specifically, its power to stimulate an understanding of the world. Students must become aware of how communication helps both comprehension of oral and written academic content material and appropriate interaction with peers and teachers in classroom discussions. Educators have the

ability to generate a desire in students to develop good communication habits (Dodge & Mallard, 1992). It is important for the teacher to express positive attitudes, be pleasant, and notice what children do. A genuine demonstration of liking each child in class helps build good communication (Davis, 1998). The greatest communicative audience children can have is an adult who is important to them and interested in them (Smith, 1998).

Listening is one of the most important areas of communication. Children can be taught to be good listeners (Miller, 1998). According to research on listening skills, a good listener focuses attention on the message and reviews the important information. Parents can model good listening and advise their children about how to be an "active listener", how to pick out conversation highlights, and how to ask relevant questions (Smith, 1998).

It is vital that teachers and parents teach children the difference between hearing and listening. Hearing is the function or ability to perceive sound, and listening is a skill. Children need to be aware that listening is a skill that aids their learning (Pruden, 1990). Adults need to help enhance listening skills by helping children focus on a speaker, modeling good listening skills, playing listening games, reading books daily, singing songs with patterns and rhymes, and having conversations with them (Miller, 1998).

Schools must address critical listening skills in the curriculum (Hunsaker, 1998). Teachers must explicitly teach the skills involved in listening by becoming "listening coaches" (Pruden, 1990). They must demonstrate and enforce good listening

behaviors, such as making eye contact, head nodding, listening to noises, leaning forward to show interest, and asking questions about the topic at hand (Dodge & Mallard, 1992). Teachers must also make their students aware of the fact that interpretation, evaluation, and response are all parts of listening. With that awareness students can acquire knowledge, develop language, and increase their understanding of subjects (Hunsaker, 1998).

Teachers also need to be "active listeners" themselves as they communicate with their students. They also need to let students orally share more. This will help them become more skilled at communication. This also helps them cope with their feelings. Communicating and understanding children at their level is highly effective (Stephens, 1996).

Building positive social and emotional skills, in addition to listening and speaking skills, can enhance the ability to communicate effectively. The earlier children develop trust in others within their environment, the better their emotional health. Positive social development cannot take place until children experience a trusting relationship (Stephens, 1996). The conditions are ideal for emotional and social development when parents love and understand each child individually and when they show affection and harmony between each other. Cooperation, fair play, and respect are social skills that can transfer to social situations outside the home (Brisbane, 1988). Studies have shown that children who are successful in school come from home environments where acceptance, firmness, and autonomy exist (Steinberg, 1996).

When children can connect with adults who are good role models - whether at home, in school, or in the community - they are less likely to become aggressive or violent (Gorman, 1998). If the child is surrounded by a safe, warm, caring emotional climate, then the brain is able to engage and process (Fogarty, 1997). Studies have shown that if parents do not have empathetic understanding, there may be deep, lasting consequences for the child's emotional life (Goleman, 1995).

Solid formal instruction of a social skill requires the same careful preparation found in any procedural lesson (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991). According to Bellanca (1992),

> A well-conceived early childhood program ought to be saturated with social skill instruction and opportunity for the young students to practice as they play together. The ideal program, even at the pre-school stage, would provide some modeling, guided practice, and constructive feed back in cooperative social skills, along with language development and fun activities that make learning an active engagement for all students. (p. 203)

Educators must always address social skills explicitly. Social skills do not develop for the class as a whole without deliberate, specific, and repeated attention to them. Improved social skills enable students to be more on-task, more on focus, and more concentrated in their efforts (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991).

Positive feedback in the classroom is a powerful social device for helping children to assess and define themselves

(self-concept) and to value themselves (self-esteem) (Sylwester, 1997). By reassuring the student who feels inadequate, the teacher successfully uses an opportunity to extend his/her confidence in a social situation. A student who feels good about an achievement is more likely to develop socially (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991).

A youth needs to learn how to "read" other people's social behaviors and cues. Successful social interactions depend on the ability to perceive and correctly interpret the nonverbal behaviors of others and to demonstrate sensitivity to their points of view and feelings. It is also the responsibility of the entire school staff to teach appropriate social behavior to their students (Dowd & Tierney, 1992). Moral guidance is linked to promoting positive social skills. It helps set the stage for later development of positive moral values (Stephens, 1996).

Author and psychologist Daniel Goleman states (as cited in O'Neil, 1996) that "emotional intelligence is being able to manage distressing moods well and control impulses. It's remaining hopeful when you have setbacks. It's empathy. And it's social skills" (p. 7). The good news is that emotional intelligence is virtually all learned. Goleman believes schools must teach children how to recognize and manage their emotions, and that educators must model emotional intelligence in caring, respectful interactions with children. The circuits of emotions are sculpted by experiences throughout childhood (O'Neil, 1996).

Studies have shown that emotional literacy programs improve academic achievement and performance. Children need to learn the

skills necessary in handling their upsets, listening or focusing, controlling impulses, feeling responsibility for their work, and caring about learning. Any techniques that enforce these skills will help in their education. Emotional literacy enhances the school's ability to teach. Emotional learning becomes ingrained as experiences are repeated. The brain reflects this learning as strengthened pathways or neural habits to apply in times of duress, frustration, and hurt (Goleman, 1995).

Sensitive teachers can help provide opportunities for children to examine their emotions. They can do this through drama, journal writing, or literature that targets emotions. Building self-esteem is also a skill that can help children become emotionally secure (Stephens, 1996). When students are upset, the "stoplight technique" can help dissolve intense emotional situations. This is a process in which students stop, calm down, and think before they act. Skills such as being able to resist impulsivity or delaying gratification are also helpful in the emotional and academic areas (O'Neil, 1996). Much of the research on emotional intelligence suggests that it may be more valuable or more important than an intelligence quotient (Goleman, 1995).

There are some general curricular areas that need to be addressed. In 1996 early childhood specialist Karen Stephens stated, "A well-planned curriculum should have variety. The planners should strive to educate the whole child. Activities should address all areas of development: social, emotional, intellectual, physical, and moral" (p. 27). By implementing the

theory of multiple intelligences, teachers can determine which ways their students learn most effectively and how they participate in the communicative process (Gardner, 1993).

The problems and challenges created by the changing world in which both students and schools exist must be directly targeted. The teacher and the school must start with what they can most control which is instructional time and proven methods that focus on problems which regularly block quality instruction time. The methods for teaching cooperative social skills have not only proven their worth but also provided a framework for intensifying academic achievement, fostering higher-order thinking, and extending learning into new dimensions for all learners (Bellanca, 1992).

Prosocial skills must be intertwined within a school's curriculum to empower students to get along and lay the groundwork for a harmonious classroom. They are life skills that every person needs to be a happy, healthy, productive human being. To create a caring community of students, prosocial skills must be taught (Canter & Petersen, 1995). The teacher will need to spend extra time at the beginning of the school year changing behaviors and attitudes and working on cooperative social skills. In return, the students will dig into academic work more deeply with fewer interruptions and more time on task (Bellanca, 1992).

There is a very definite, inherent need for the skills of conflict resolution to be a part of a school's curriculum. Now more than ever it is imperative that educators build the teaching of skills towards the creation of a peaceable school. In order to

accomplish this essential goal, the strategies of mediation, negotiation, and group problem solving must be part of a school's plan (Bodine, Crawford, Schrumpf, 1994).

Better communication and other academic gains for students have been determined when class size is around 15 to 17 students. The research really confirms common sense. The benefits boil down to better discipline, more individual attention for students, and opportunities for teachers to use more varied types of instruction that engage students (Gursky, 1998).

Through cooperation, the skills of communication can improve. As cited in the book Waging Peace In Our Schools, Ashley Montagu was quoted as saying, "Cooperation, not conflict, has been the most valuable form of behavior for humans taken at any stage of evolutionary history." Cooperation is a prerequisite for many other tasks. Children aren't born cooperative, and they aren't typically taught or encouraged to be so in society (Lantieri & Patti, 1996). Early experiences in the family must teach a child how to cooperate and adapt to the needs of others. Effective guidance helps children learn to communicate well, get along with others, and deal with feelings in acceptable ways (Brisbane, 1988).

Helping, sharing, participating, planning, and working together are all essential to the heart of a cooperative classroom. Cooperation then leads to ownership, involvement, and greater opportunities for student self-discipline (Freiberg, 1996). Cooperative learning is an instructional strategy that uses

groups to promote cooperation. With cooperation, student achievement, self-esteem, responsibility, higher-level thinking, and favorable attitudes toward school dramatically increase (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991).

Cooperative learning teaches values and academics in a single stroke even if it is only implemented for part of the day (Lickona, 1991). According to the research of Slavin, Johnson & Johnson, and other researchers, mastery of basic skills increases with cooperative learning (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991). Cooperative learning has consistently shown positive academic growth and achievement. The moral objectives which coincide are beneficial (Pritchard, 1998). To begin cooperative learning, the teacher must explain that cooperation is an important classroom goal, and it helps to build a sense of community. The teacher must specifically teach cooperation skills and foster the accountability of every group member to cooperate. Assigning roles to group members and matching cooperative learning to the task are also necessary. The teacher must also allow time for students to reflect on cooperation (Lickona, 1991).

To maximize the impact of cooperative learning and to increase character development and academic achievement, a teacher must use various cooperative formats. There are eight kinds of cooperative learning:

1. Learning partners
2. Cluster group seating
3. Student team-learning
4. Jigsaw learning

5. Team testing
6. Small-group projects
7. Team competition
8. Whole-class projects

(Lickona, 1991). The genuine cooperative assignment is one which naturally lends itself to team cooperation. It is difficult, even impossible, for a student to complete it alone (Glasser, 1988). "Cooperative learning clearly has the potential to make classrooms exciting and productive places where students learn to cooperate and cooperate to learn" (Lickona, 1991, p. 197).

Although cooperating is natural to humans, in schools it may seem unnatural to students who are typically involved in competitive educational practices (Bodine et al., 1994). Cooperation and responsibility make up the foundation on which all other skills are built, especially in the "peaceable school". William Kreidler first coined the term "peaceable classroom" in the early 1970's. This term refers to a classroom in which students respectfully learn and work together. Kreidler stresses that the strength of the peaceable classroom develops from the presence of six principles: cooperation, caring communication, the appreciation of diversity, the appropriate expression of feelings, responsible decision making, and conflict resolution (Lantieri & Patti, 1996).

Cooperation in problem-solving ventures is the foundation of conflict resolution. In cooperative learning activities, group members interact with one another to solve problems. The ability to express and resolve conflicts is central to a peaceable school.

The coercive behaviors of both adults and children must be replaced with the skills and strategies of conflict resolution. These skills and strategies are the tools for building a peaceable school. Many strong, valid reasons exist for teaching conflict resolution strategies in the school environment (Bodine et al., 1994).

To give students a way to deal with differences without aggression or coercion, the strategies of mediation, negotiation, and group problem solving are taught. Building a peaceable climate, understanding conflict and understanding peace and peacemaking are other skill areas fundamental to the achievement of a peaceable school. The classroom teacher is the key player in providing the learning opportunities to create a peaceable environment in school and in exemplifying the behaviors expected of a peacemaker (Bodine et al., 1994).

The moral life of the classroom is full of opportunities to teach children to handle conflict constructively. The class meeting, which develops a problem-solving disposition in students, is one way to help students learn to deal effectively with conflicts (Lickona, 1991). Another technique is referred to as "fair fighting" in which the two parties separate and talk to a staff member alone about the conflict. Then the parties reunite to discuss the problem in hopes of resolution (Dowd & Tierney, 1992). As an individual, one needs to learn that when anger builds, it should be a cue to stop and consider what to do next rather than strike out impulsively (Goleman, 1995).

Mediation is a conflict resolution skill involving effective communication and problem solving. It requires openness, honesty, and equal power between two parties. Mediation has been used in various ways and in various settings. It is acknowledged in many cultures and even honored as a process. Students can understand mediation as well as cultural diversity by learning about Buddhist monks and the native Hawaiians who consult mediators in ancient problem-solving processes (Lantieri & Patti, 1996).

To summarize, it has been documented that many solutions exist to improve communication skills. By implementing the solutions found within society, family, curriculum, and classroom instruction, educators can help children learn to become better communicators.

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of cooperative learning instruction, during the period of February 1999 to May 1999, the targeted first and second grade students will increase their communication skills, as measured by an observaton checklist, student writing samples, and teachers' journals.

As a result of a conflict resolution plan, during the period of February 1999 to May 1999, the targeted first and second grade students will increase their communication skills, as measured by an observation checklist, student writing samples, and teachers' journals.

In order to accomplish the project objectives, the following processes are necessary:

1. A series of activities will be developed to explicitly teach listening and speaking skills.
2. A series of activities will be developed to explicitly teach social and emotional skills.
3. A series of cooperative learning activities will be

developed to reinforce the areas of listening, speaking, social, and emotional skills.

4. A conflict resolution plan will be developed to apply listening, speaking, social, and emotional skills.

Project Action Plan

The researchers at the targeted site will address the communication skills of the students by implementing the following intervention processes:

I. Activities addressing listening and speaking skills will be implemented four days per week for 30 minutes each day from February 8-19, 1999. Listening and speaking skills will be reviewed, practiced, and reinforced throughout the remainder of the year as needed.

   A. Classsroom Setup (Appendix D)

      1. Establish three listening rules and design a "Brain Alert" listening chart.
      2. Model and role play good listening skills.
      3. Provide a listening center for students to use on a regular basis.
      4. Establish three speaking rules and design a "Broadcast" speaking chart.
      5. Model and role play good speaking skills.
      6. Provide a speaking/recording center for students to use on a regular basis.

   B. Listening Activities (Appendix E)

      1. Paying attention games: "Telephone" and "Simon Says".

2. Listen and do activities: "Snowman" and "Beach" (Schaffer, 1985).

3. Listen and reason activities: "Build a Robot" (Simms, Barrett, Huisingh, Zachman, Bladgen, Orman, 1992) and "Scrambled Sentences".

C. Speaking Activities

1. Write and read about an item for "Show and Tell".

2. Choose to write a poem, a riddle, or a joke to read aloud.

3. Orally perform a role in a class play. The first grade students will perform the play entitled The Three Little Pigs adapted by Adam Burdick, and the second grade students will perform the play entitled Harlequin and the Gift of Many Colors by Remy Charlip and Burton Supree.

II. Activities addressing social and emotional skills will be implemented four days per week for 30 minutes each day from February 22 - March 5, 1999. Social and emotional skills will be reviewed, practiced, and reinforced throughout the remainder of the year as needed.

A. Classroom Setup (Appendix F)

1. Establish four "Social Boundaries" and design a poster of these social rules.

2. As a class, read and sign a "Classroom Pledge" (Canter & Petersen, 1995).

3. Have a "feelings box" available for students to write down and express their feelings using

"I Messages" (Canter & Petersen, 1995).

4. Have books available for teachers/students to read about social and emotional skills or situations.

B. Social Skills Activities (Appendix G)

1. Teach and discuss respecting others and recognizing diversity by conducting a puppet show of Aesop's fable The Lion and the Mouse.
2. Role play, model, and brainstorm good manners in different situations. Then illustrate and share pictures of different manners.
3. Practice praising each other and giving compliments by playing the "Heart Game" (Canter & Petersen, 1995).

C. Emotional Skills Activities (Appendix H)

1. Practice expressing feelings or emotions by participating in the "Feelings Basket" activity (Canter & Petersen, 1995).
2. Practice having empathy for others by responding to examples of empathic situations.
3. Practice reactions by responding to examples of positive or negative emotional situations.

D. Social and Emotional Skills Culminating Activities

1. Create a "Friendship Board" which reviews skills.

2. Make and share personalized friendship cupcakes decorated by peers.

III. Activities addressing cooperation skills will be implemented throughout the weeks of February 8 - May 21, 1999. Direct instruction of cooperative skills will be taught for 15 minutes daily February 1-5, 1999, and then cooperative learning will be integrated throughout the content areas for the remainder of the year.

A. Classroom Setup (Appendix I)

1. Student arrangement (pairs, triples, quads) will be determined by the cooperative activity.
2. Brainstorm what cooperation means and write the ideas on a web graphic organizer.
3. Write five main cooperation rules on a poster to display.

B. Cooperative Activities (Appendix J) (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991)

1. "Draw This" activity
2. "Teamwork" T-Chart
3. "Think-Pair-Share" activity
4. "Torn Circles" activity
5. "Cooperating and Getting Along" song (Canter & Petersen, 1995)
6. Toss bean bags to practice cooperation.

IV. Activities addressing conflict resolution skills will be introduced and taught for 15 minutes daily January 25-29, 1999. The skills will be developed and practiced as

needed through May 21, 1999.

A. Classroom Setup (Appendix K)

1. Design and discuss a "Tug O'War" creed to display (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991).

2. Design, discuss, and implement the "Stop, Think, and Make a Choice" traffic sign (Williams, 1991).

B. Conflict Resolution Activities (Appendix L)

1. Brainstorm ideas for resolving conflicts using situational cards.

2. Model, role play, and discuss the following strategies (Williams, 1991):

   a. Evaluate the importance of conflict

   b. Use words to peacefully discuss the conflict

   c. Walk away from conflict or ignore adversary

   d. Resist adversary with "why" questioning

   e. Give in or be agreeable

   f. Compromise

   g. Be assertive in a non-aggressive and non-threatening manner

   h. Ask for mediation

   i. Act as a peacemaker

3. Review and reinforce conflict resolution strategies using the following activities:

   a. Conflict resolution puzzles (Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991).

   b. Conflict resolution literature

By implementing this project action plan, the researchers hope to improve communication skills that interfere with academic growth and performance.

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, the observation checklists of students' communication skills, the assessment of students' writing skills, and the teachers' journals of students' social and emotional skills used at the beginning of the intervention will be re-administered. The data will be compared and analyzed as part of the assessment process.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve academic achievement through enhanced communication skills. Listening, speaking, social, and emotional skills were specifically targeted. In order to accomplish this purpose, direct instruction of listening, speaking, social, and emotional skills was used. After direct instruction of these skills, cooperative learning activities and a conflict resolution plan were developed to reinforce and to apply these communication skills. The action plan targeted first and second grade students, and the length of the intervention was 16 weeks during the last semester of the school year.

During the first week of the intervention, conflict resolution skills were introduced and taught. These skills were explicitly taught for 15 minutes daily. The skills were developed and practiced throughout the intervention period. The classrooms were set up to help develop conflict resolution skills. The setup for each classroom included: a conflict resolution creed and a poster showing three steps of conflict resolution. The conflict resolution activities included: brainstorming ideas for resolving conflicts using situational cards,

modeling and role playing various conflict resolution strategies, and reviewing conflict resolution skills through puzzles and books.

The targeted students' desks were arranged in cooperative groups of three to five students during the second week of the intervention. Direct instruction of cooperative skills was taught at this time as well. These skills were explicitly taught for 15 minutes daily. Cooperative learning was integrated throughout the content areas for the remainder of the intervention. The classrooms were set up to help develop cooperation skills. The setup for each classroom included: cooperative group desk arrangements, brainstorming and defining cooperation ideas, and a cooperation rules poster. Several specific activities were used to develop cooperation skills.

Activities which addressed listening and speaking skills were implemented for four days each week during the third and fourth weeks. These skills were explicitly taught for 30 minutes daily. Listening and speaking skills were reviewed, practiced, and reinforced for the remainder of the intervention. The classrooms were set up to help develop listening and speaking skills. The setup for each classroom included: a listening rules chart, a listening center, a speaking rules chart, a speaking/recording center, and modeling and role playing of good listening and speaking skills. The listening activities included: paying attention games, listen and do activities, and listen and reason activities. The speaking activities included: write and read aloud activities and a class play presentation.

Activities which addressed social and emotional skills were implemented for four days each week during the fifth and sixth weeks of the intervention. These skills were explicitly taught for 30 minutes daily. Social and emotional skills were reviewed, practiced, and reinforced for the remainder of the intervention. The classrooms were set up to help develop social and emotional skills. The setup for each classroom included: a social rules poster, a poster depicting emotions, a classroom pledge, the writing of "I Messages" to express feelings, and an assortment of books to read about social and emotional skills or situations. The social activities included: a puppet show about recognizing diversity, role playing, modeling, and brainstorming good manners, illustrating and sharing pictures showing people using good manners, and a praise and compliment peer game. The emotional activities included: activities to practice expressing feelings and empathy, an activity to practice reacting to emotional situations, and the making and sharing of friendship treats.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

To collect and compare data before and after the intervention, some of the same tools that were used to establish an initial baseline guide were re-administered to the students upon completion of the intervention. In order to determine the baseline before the intervention, the teacher/researchers used the following data collection methods: a survey of teachers' perception of students' communication skills, observation checklists of student communication skills, samples of students' writing

skills, teachers' journals of students' social and emotional skills, and students' Iowa Test of Basic Skills listening scores. In order to assess the effects of the project action plan, the teacher/researchers used the following data collection methods: observation checklists of student communication skills, samples of students' writing skills, and teachers' journals of students' social and emotional skills.

The observation checklists were used to gather preintervention and postintervention data about the communication skills of the targeted first and second grade students over a two-week period. The observable behaviors were eye contact, quiet body and mouth, response to cues, clear speech, positive social interaction, and participation. A comparison of the preintervention and postintervention ratings of observable behaviors for the first and second grade students is presented in table nine and ten.

Table 9

Number of First Grade Students Exhibiting Observed Behaviors; Pretest (Two Observations Each) January 25, 1999 Through February 5, 1999 and Posttest (Two Observations Each) May 17, 1999 Through May 28, 1999

	Eye Contact		Quiet Body and Mouth		Response to Cues		Clear Speech		Positive Social Interaction		Participation	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Rarely	11	4	12	3	8	0	7	0	6	1	11	2
Sometimes	15	13	10	9	16	8	16	12	17	15	14	19
Frequently	16	25	20	30	18	34	19	30	19	26	17	21

N=42

Table 10

Number of Second Grade Students Exhibiting Observed Behaviors; Pretest (Two Observations Each) January 25, 1999 Through February 5, 1999 and Posttest (Two Observations Each) May 10, 1999 Through May 21, 1999

	Eye Contact		Quiet Body and Mouth		Response to Cues		Clear Speech		Positive Social Interaction		Participation	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Rarely	27	14	24	15	22	7	26	14	25	11	32	7
Sometimes	20	25	15	21	25	25	17	22	17	27	18	28
Frequently	5	13	13	16	5	20	9	16	10	14	2	17

N=52

In comparing the preintervention and postintervention data, both the first and second grade students' communication skills improved. For the rating of *frequently* all of the behaviors increased for both the first and second grade students. For the rating of *sometimes* all of the behaviors except participation increased for the first grade students. For the rating of *sometimes* all of the behaviors increased for the second grade students. For the rating of *rarely* all of the behaviors decreased for both the first and second grade students. The intervention appears to have had a positive effect on all targeted behaviors.

The students showed the most improvement within the *frequently* rating of occurrence. Of particular note is the positive shift from the number of *rarely* rated occurrences to the number of *sometimes* and *frequently* rated occurrences. These results are illustrated in figures 9 and 10.

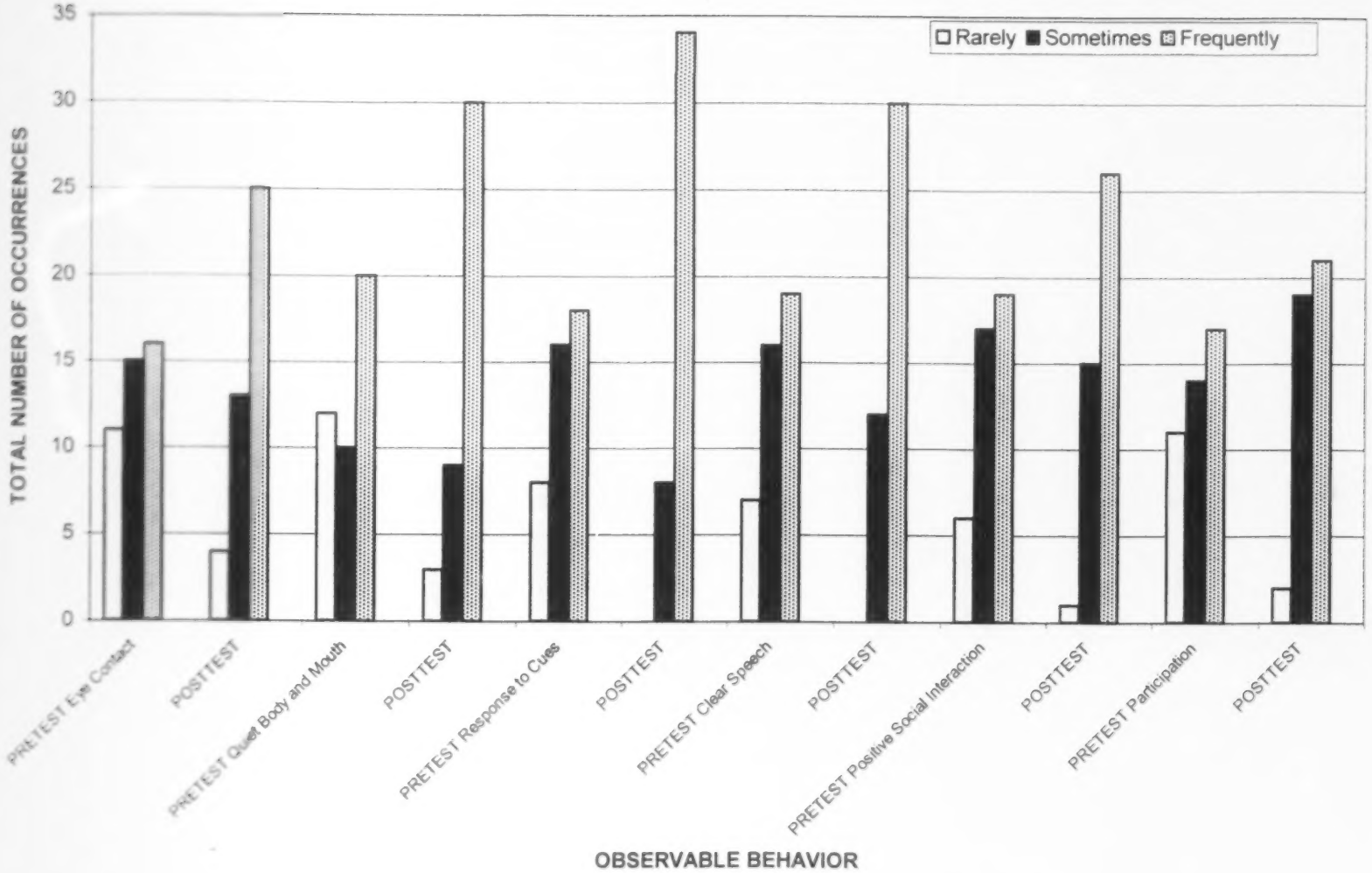

Figure 9. The total number of occurrences of first grade students' communication skills in each category during January 25, 1999 through February 5, 1999 and May 17, 1999 through May 28, 1999.

N=42

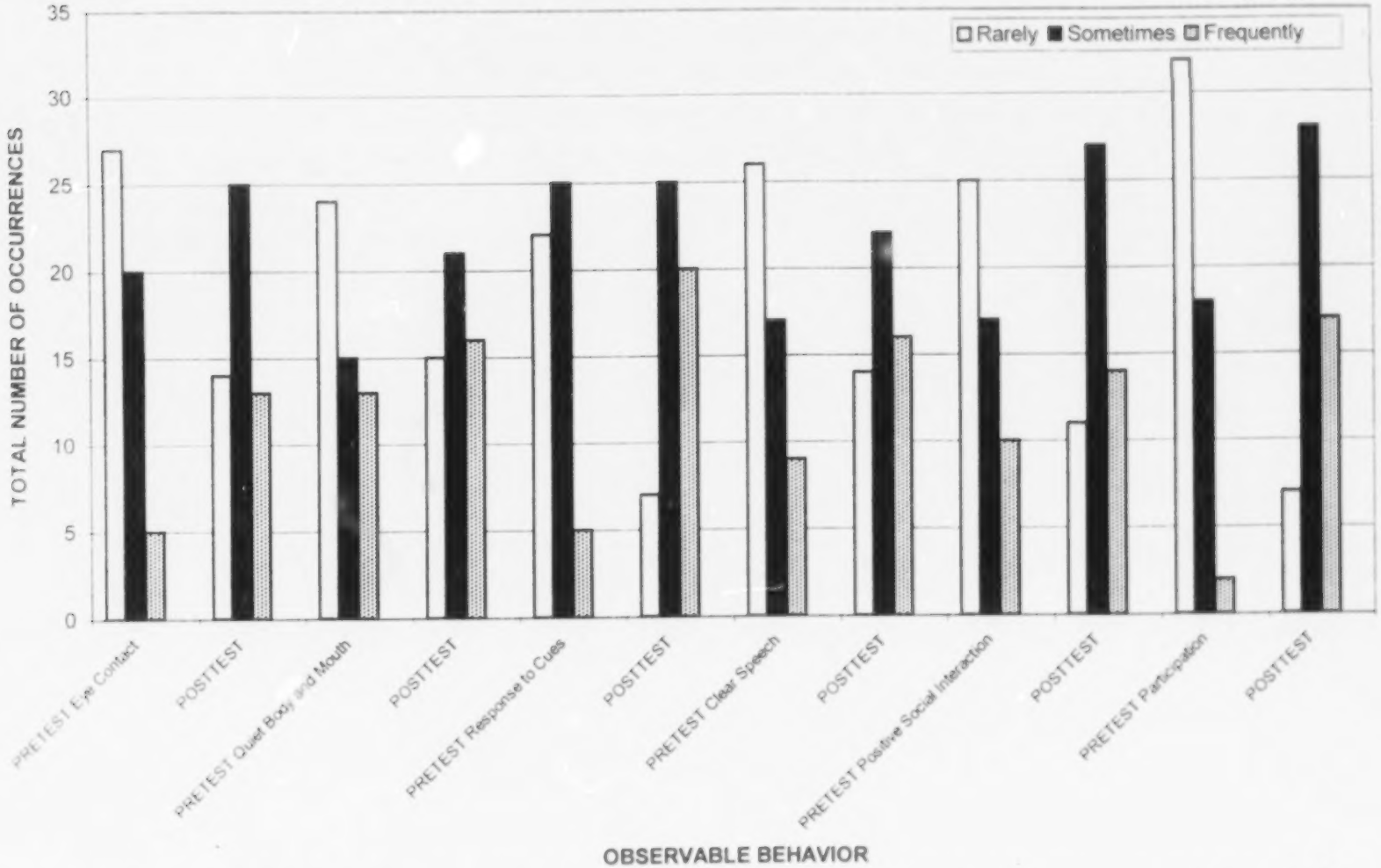

Figure 10. The total number of occurrences of second grade students' communication skills in each category during January 25, 1999 through February 5, 1999 and May 10, 1999 through May 21, 1999.

N=52

The samples of students' writing skills were used to gather preintervention and postintervention data about the written communication skills of the targeted first and second grade students. Summaries comparing the students' preintervention and postintervention writing skills are presented in two different forms for each grade level. Figures 11 and 12 illustrate comparative percentages of students who were able to meet from zero to all six criteria.

The teacher/researchers used six basic writing criteria upon which the first and second grade students were assessed before and after the project action plan. The six criteria were complete thoughts, capitalization, ending punctuation, organization, supportive sentences, and age-appropriate spelling. Figures 13 and 14 present a comparative item analysis indicating the percentage of students who were successful with each specific writing criterion before and after the project action plan.

A comparison of the preintervention and postintervention data showing the number of first grade students with positive responses to the writing criteria is presented in table 11.

Table 11

Percentage of First Grade Students with Positive Response to Writing Criteria: Pretest January 21, 1999 and Posttest June 3, 1999

Number of Criteria Met	January Pretest	June Posttest
0	5.0%	5.0%
1	5.5%	0%
2	0%	0%
3	5.5%	0%
4	17.0%	5.0%
5	17.0%	0%
6	50.0%	90.0%

Of the 18 first grade students who completed the preintervention writing samples, 33% of the students met from zero to four of the writing criteria. Sixty-seven percent of the students met from five to six of the writing criteria. Of the 20 first grade students who completed the post intervention writing samples, 10% of the students met from zero to four of the writing criteria. Ninety percent of the students met from five to six of the writing criteria. The percentage of students meeting from zero to four of the writing criteria fell from 33% to just 10% after the intervention. Before the intervention, 67% of the students met from five to six of the writing criteria. After the intervention, 90% of the students met from five to six

of the writing criteria. These data indicate that a higher percentage of the first grade students met a greater number of the writing criteria. This information is illustrated in figure 11.

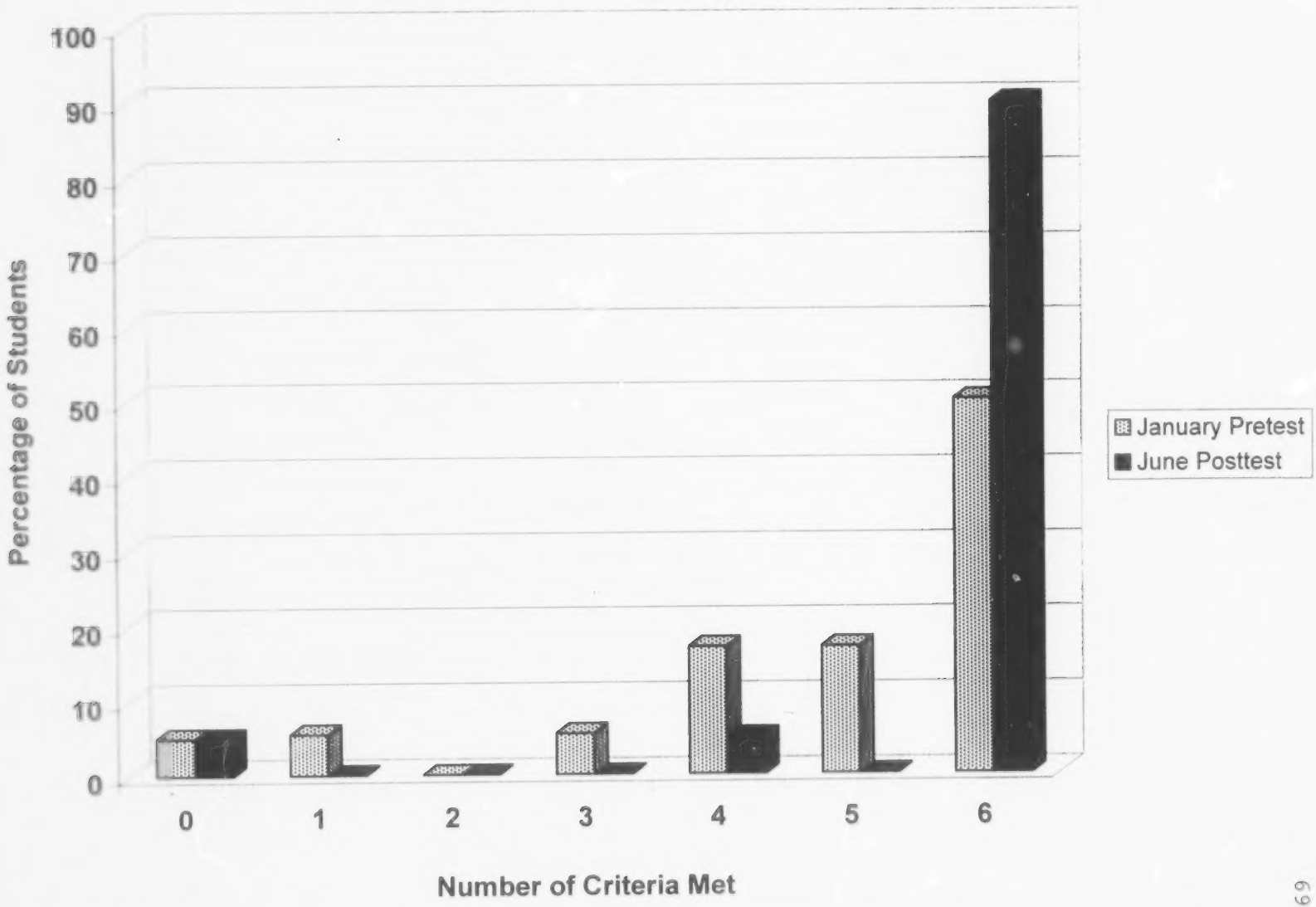

Figure 11. Percentages of first grade students meeting numbers of writing criteria on January 21, 1999 and June 3, 1999.

A comparison of the preintervention and postintervention data showing the number of second grade students with positive responses to the writing criteria is presented in table 12.

Table 12

Percentage of Second Grade Students With Positive Responses to Writing Criteria: Pretest January 22, 1999 and Posttest June 1, 1999

Number of Criteria Met	January Pretest	June Posttest
0	0%	0%
1	0%	0%
2	9%	8%
3	13%	0%
4	30%	4%
5	26%	42%
6	22%	46%

All the 23 second grade students who completed the preintervention writing samples met at least two of the writing criteria. Fifty-two percent of the students met at least four of the writing criteria. Forty-eight percent of the students met from five to six of the writing criteria. Of the 26 second grade students who completed postintervention writing samples, 12% of the students met from zero to four of the writing criteria. Eighty-eight percent of the students met from five to six of the writing criteria. The percentage of students meeting from zero to four of the writing criteria fell from 52% to just 12% after

the intervention. Before the intervention, 48% of the students met from five to six of the writing criteria. After the intervention, 88% of the students met from five to six of the writing criteria. These data indicate that a higher percentage of the second grade students met a greater number of the writing criteria. This information is illustrated in figure 12.

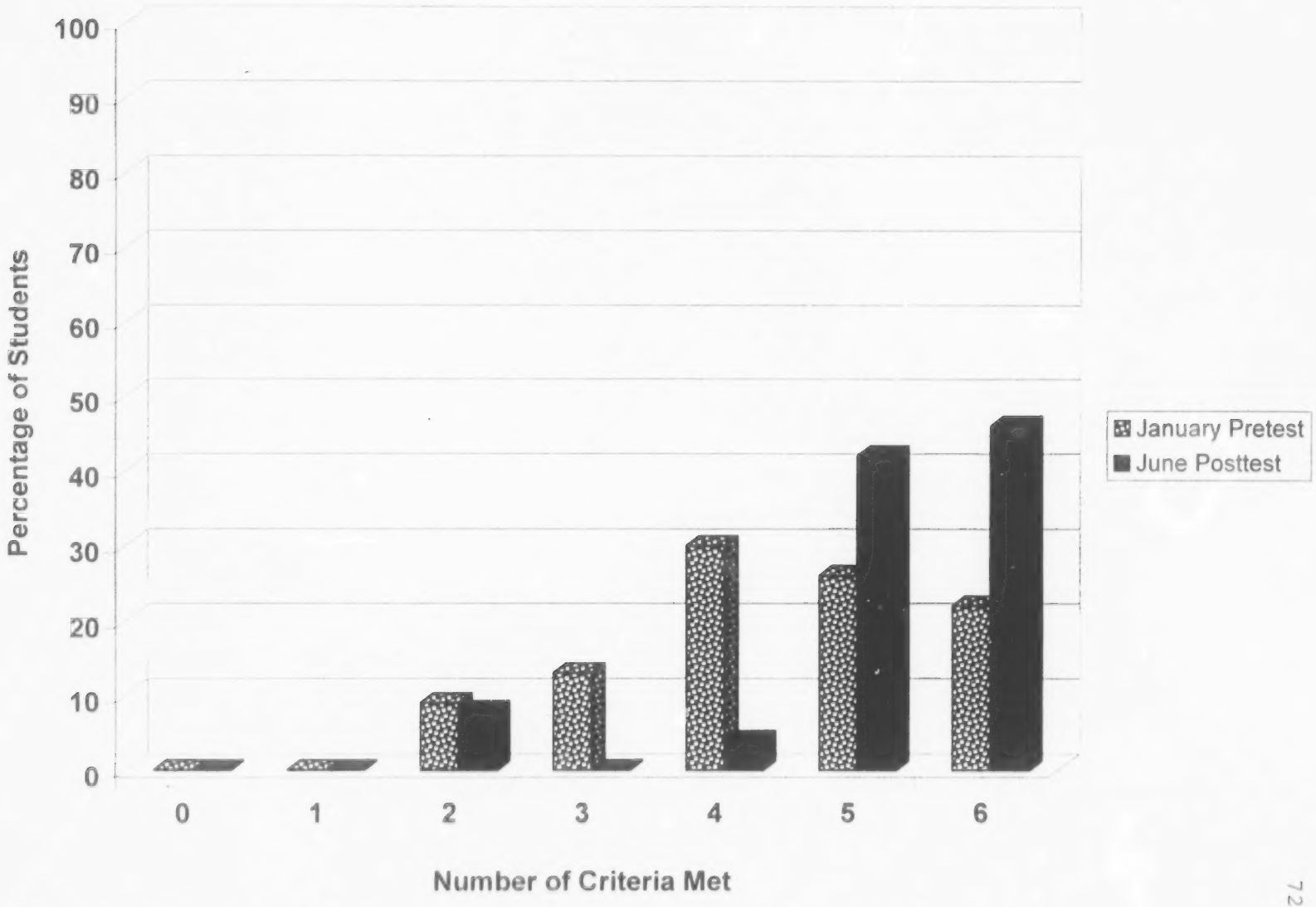

Figure 12. Percentages of second grade students meeting numbers of writing criteria on January 22, 1999 and June 1, 1999.

A comparative item analysis which indicates the percentage of first grade students who were successful with each specific writing criterion before and after the project action plan are presented in table 13.

Table 13

Percentage of First Grade Students Meeting Specific Writing Criteria: Pretest January 21, 1999 and Posttest June 3, 1999

	January Pretest	June Posttest
Complete Thoughts	78%	95%
Capitalization	89%	95%
Ending Punctuation	72%	90%
Organization	72%	90%
Supportive Sentences	83%	95%
Age-appropriate Spelling	67%	95%

Postintervention results showed that the first grade students improved in all six writing skill areas. Seventeen percent more of the students met the writing criterion of complete thoughts, and 18% more of the students met the writing criteria of both ending punctuation and organization. The greatest gain was in the area of age-appropriate spelling in which 28% more of the students met the criterion. By the end of the intervention, 90% or more of the first grade students were successful in all six of the writing skill areas. This information is illustrated in figure 13.

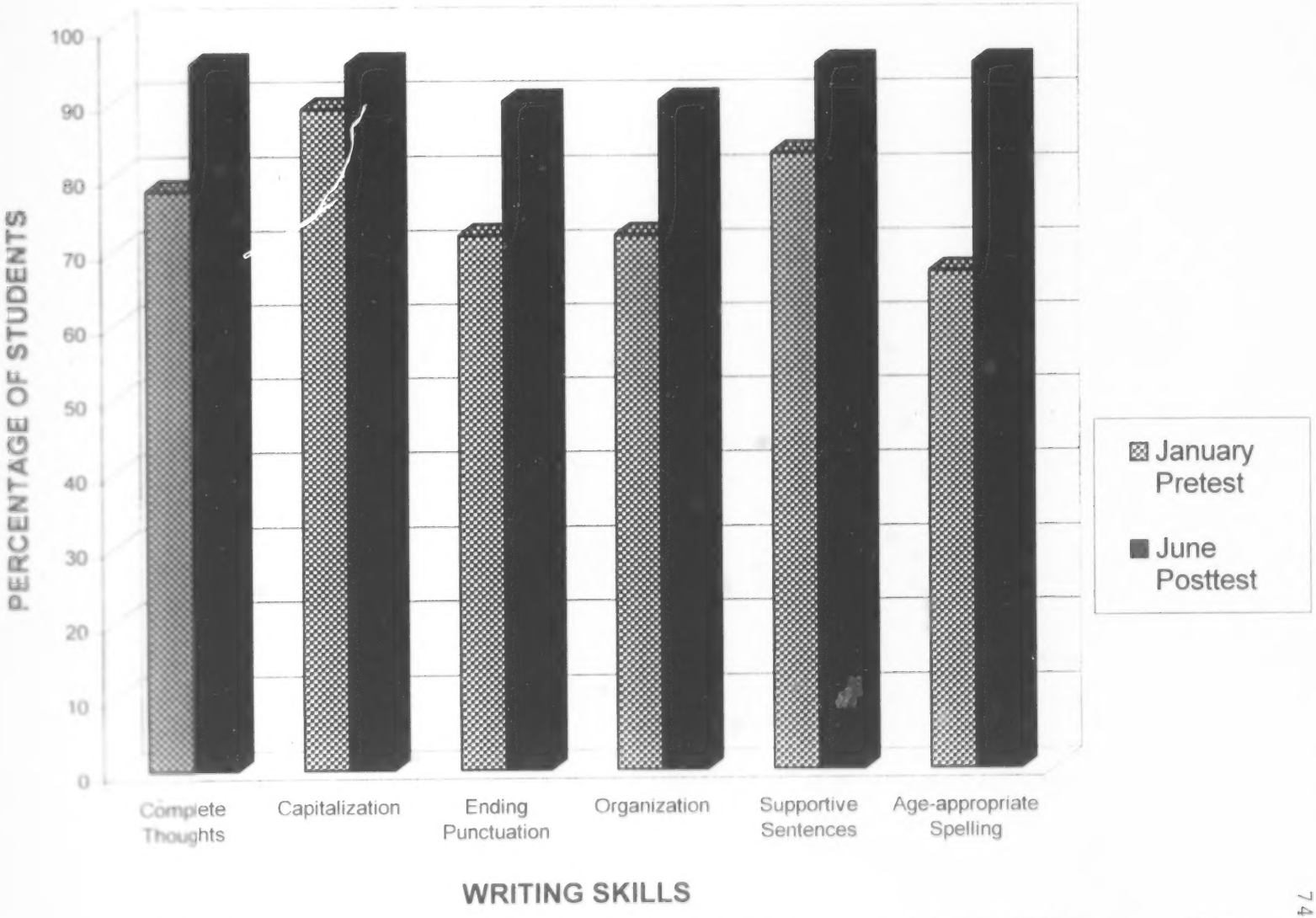

Figure 13. Percentage of first grade students meeting specific writing criteria on January 21, 1999 and June 3, 1999.

A comparative item analysis which indicates the percentage of second grade students who were successful with each specific writing criterion before and after the project action plan are presented in table 14.

Table 14

Percentage of Second Grade Students Meeting Specific Writing Criteria: Pretest January 22, 1999 and Posttest June 1, 1999

	January Pretest	June Posttest
Complete Thoughts	70%	91%
Capitalization	78%	98%
Ending Punctuation	87%	92%
Organization	48%	91%
Supportive Sentences	74%	85%
Age-appropriate Spelling	83%	85%

Postintervention results showed that the second grade students improved in all six writing skill areas. Eighteen percent more of the students met the writing criterion of capitalization, and 21% more of the students met the writing criterion of complete thoughts. The greatest gain was in the area of organization in which 43% more of the students met the criterion. By the end of the intervention, 85% or more of the second grade students were successful in all six of the writing skill areas. This information is illustrated in figure 14.

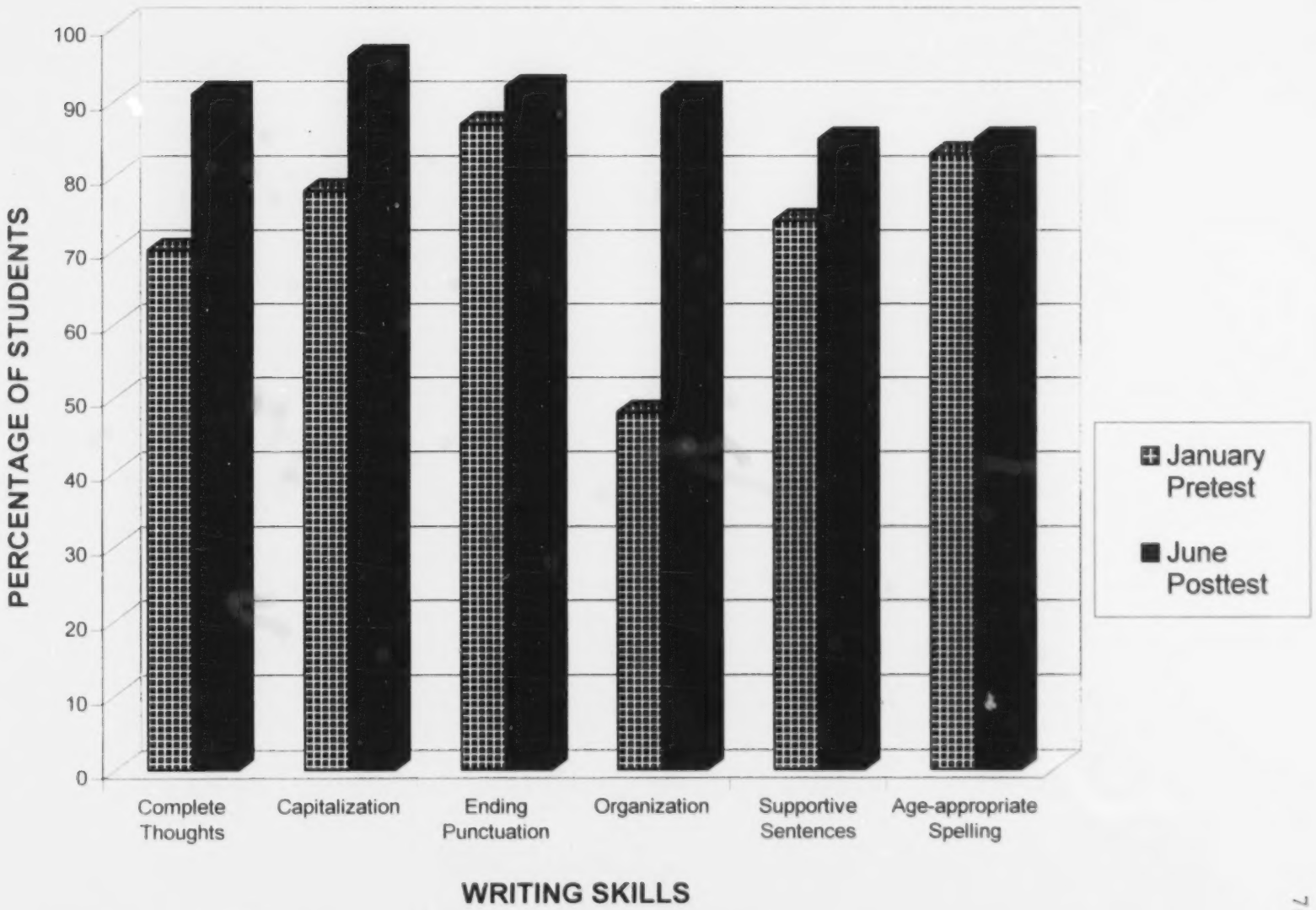

Figure 14. Percentage of second grade students meeting specific writing criteria on January 22, 1999 and June 1, 1999.

The teacher/researchers kept journals reflecting the social and emotional behaviors of the respective first and second grade students before and after the intervention. Social and emotional behaviors were recorded daily for two-week periods at the beginning and at the end of the intervention.

At the beginning of the intervention, the teacher/researcher of the first grade students cited many deficits in the students' social and emotional skills. Some of the consistent difficulties were in the areas of not respecting others, denying responsibility for inappropriate actions, acting uncooperative, and acting unfairly toward others. A few students occasionally acted defiantly.

During the intervention, direct instruction was designed to target and develop social and emotional skills. After the intervention, the teacher/researcher noted that the first grade students showed many improvements with their social and emotional skills. Some of the improvements included: acting helpful and cooperative, giving praise to peers, showing respect and concern for others, following guidelines and rules, and discussing emotions and resolving conflicts.

At the beginning of the intervention, the teacher/researcher of the second grade students cited several deficits in the students' social and emotional skills. Some of the consistent difficulties were in the areas of not respecting others, challenging authority, denying responsibility for inappropriate actions, being unfair or rudely competitive, being unable to express emotions appropriately, and being unable to control

behavior. Overall, the teacher/researcher noted several incidences of excessive talking and interruptions. The teacher also stated that one of the second grade students was suspended for making sexually explicit gestures and comments toward the teacher.

During the project action plan, direct instruction was designed to target and develop social and emotional skills. After the intervention, the teacher/researcher noted that the second grade students showed some improvements with their social and emotional skills. Some of the improvements included: acting more cooperative, showing tolerance or acceptance of differences, expressing emotions more appropriately, and resolving conflicts. Areas which still needed improvement included: showing respect and talking at appropriate times.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The presentation and analysis of the data on communication skills suggests the students' academic performances improved. Academic growth was reflected in the written communication skills of the students. The specific communication areas of listening, speaking, social, and emotional skills improved; Therefore, the students were better at cooperative learning and conflict resolution. The students applied their communication skills throughout the curriculum.

The observation checklist data showed that in the areas of listening and speaking the students' skills improved. By improving these skills, the students were able to listen and speak more effectively. Consequently, the students were able

to perform better in other academic areas.

The teachers' journals reflecting the students' social and emotional skills indicated that some improvements were made. Some social and emotional skills were better developed than others. Likewise, some students developed better skills than others. The teacher/researchers noticed progressive improvements in this area which helped improve cooperation and conflict resolution skills.

The teacher/researchers were impressed with the overall improvement of the students' communication skills. Specifically, the students showed great improvements with their written communication skills. Both of the first and second grade students made gains with their ability to write in complete thoughts, to write with good organization, and to write with supportive sentences. With the improvement of written communication skills, the students may be able to transfer their skills to other academic areas and be better at communicating with others in real life situations.

The teacher/researchers are confident that all of the project goals were met with some degree of success. Some of the goals were reached with greater success than others. The teacher/researchers believe that some changes to the project action plan may insure a greater degree of success. Some of the recommended changes should include:

* Implementation of the action plan at the start of the

school year and extend through the end of the school year.

* The activities targeting the development of listening, speaking, social, and emotional skills should be taught concurrently at the beginning of the school year.
* The activities and skills of cooperation and conflict resolution should be taught immediately after the initial communication skills.
* More time should be spent on explicitly teaching and practicing the communication skills.
* Expressing feeling through writing should be included in the writing criteria.
* The action plan should be adopted by all grade levels.

Along with these recommended changes, the teacher/researchers emphasize that these activities appealed to their first and second grade students. Therefore, teachers of other grade levels should adapt the intervention activities to their students' developmental levels.

The teacher/researchers recommend that the communication skills be taught as a foundation to be built upon and to integrate throughout the curriculum. It is recommended that the communication skills be taught with as much emphasis as the other basic academic skills. It is also recommended that the communication skills be taught constantly and consistently with a lot of review and practice throughout the school year. Again, the teacher/researchers feel adamant that for the students to

successfully learn and transfer good communication skills, the skills must be directly and explicitly taught.

As the teacher/researchers, our goal was to improve academic achievement through enhanced communication skills. Our intent was to help each child develop good communication skills. We realize that there may be intrinsic and extrinsic factors that may hinder the development of these skills.

We are pleased with this project and its results. We know that our students greatly benefited from this intervention and its application across the curriculum. We plan to continue to use the intervention strategies in the future. Having good communication skills is essential for effective learning and for academic achievement.

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Appendices

Appendix A

COVER LETTER TO TEACHERS FOR STUDENT COMMUNICATION SURVEY

TO: Teachers and Staff

FROM:

RE: Survey of Students' Communication Skills

DATE:

We are in the process of collecting data regarding students' communication skills. Your response is valuable and appreciated. Please return your completed survey to _____. We need them by _____.

Before responding to the attached survey, please take into account the following explanations of terms:

Good Listening:	Focusing attention on verbal messages to actively think and interpret information
Good Speaking:	Verbally expressing complete thoughts
Good Writing:	Expressing ideas by writing complete sentences
Good Social Interaction:	Relating with others in a positive and appropriate manner
Good Emotional Skills:	Knowing feelings and being able to take responsibility for controlling them

Appendix A

SURVEY OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS' COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Since it is imperative to understand that these are age-appropriate skills, please circle to indicate the grade level or levels you teach in the space provided.

Grade Level: K 1 2 3 4

Special Education Description: _____

Number of students in your class: _____

1. How many of your students demonstrate good listening skills? _____

2. How many of your students demonstrate good speaking skills? _____

3. How many of your students demonstrate age-appropriate writing skills? _____

4. How many of your students demonstrate good social interaction skills? _____

5. How many of your students demonstrate age-appropriate emotional skills? _____

Appendix B

PROCEDURE USED FOR OBSERVATION CHECKLISTS OF STUDENTS' COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The two targeted classes were each split into five groups of four or five students. During a two-week time period, each group was observed once each week on different days.

Teachers observed students and ranked them according to how often they demonstrated specific communication skills. They were rated 3 for *frequently*, 2 for *sometimes*, and 1 for *rarely*. The separate scores were totaled.

Appendix B

OBSERVATION CHECKLISTS OF STUDENTS' COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Teacher _____ Grade Level _____ Date _____

Rate the students according to how often they demonstrate these skills:

3 = Frequently

2 = Sometimes

1 = Rarely

STUDENTS	Eye Contact	Quiet Body and Mouth	Response to Cues	Use of Clear Speech	Positive Social Interaction	Frequent Participation	Total

Appendix C

PROCEDURES AND RUBRIC FOR STUDENTS' WRITING SAMPLES

The first grade students were given a picture. They were instructed to write three descriptive sentences about it. The second grade students were instructed to write one paragraph of six or more sentences. They were told to write the steps of a recipe.

The following rubric was used to assess the writing skills of both grade levels.

1. Did the student write in complete thoughts?	____ Yes	____ No
2. Did the student use proper capitalization?	____ Yes	____ No
3. Did the student use proper ending punctuation?	____ Yes	____ No
4. Did the student use good organization?	____ Yes	____ No
5. Did the student's sentences support the topic?	____ Yes	____ No
6. Did the student demonstrate age-appropriate spelling?	____ Yes	____ No

Appendix D

CLASSROOM SETUP FOR LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS

Listening Rules

1. Sit in a "brain alert" position.
2. Watch the person who is talking.
3. Keep your mouth and body quiet.

Speaking Rules

1. Address the audience.
2. Use clear speech.
3. Use good volume.

Appendix E

LISTENING ACTIVITIES

Teacher's Directions

Before every lesson read to the class: Listen very carefully while I read to you. When I tap my pencil, unfold your papers and follow my instructions. Fold them up only when I tap my pencil again. (Teacher reads steps only once.)

Materials: crayons and pictures

"Snowman"

Phil is having fun building a snowman but he needs our help to finish it. Listen carefully while I read the directions. Our snowman wants a carrot for a nose. He would also like to have a black hat. **TAP** Draw the nose and color it. Color the hat. **TAP** The snowman's mouth is made of raisins. He should also be holding a yellow broom in his hand. **TAP** Circle what is made of raisins. Draw something in the snowman's hand. **TAP** Phil found some brown rocks. He will use them for the snowman's buttons. Then he will give the snowman a green scarf to keep him warm. **TAP** Draw the snowman's buttons and scarf. **TAP**

"Beach"

It's a very hot day. Bonnie and Penny packed a lunch and went to the beach. Bonnie has a yellow towel. Penny has a blue towel. **TAP** Color the two towels. **TAP** Their umbrella is very pretty. It is red with purple flowers. **TAP** Color the umbrella. **TAP** Each of the girls brought a pail. Penny does not have a shovel. Bonnie's pail does not have a handle. **TAP** Put a red X on Penny's pail. Draw the missing part on Bonnie's pail. **TAP** The girls saw lots of fish swimming in the ocean. The happy fish is bright green. The angry fish is blue with a yellow tail. **TAP** Color the fish. **TAP**

LISTENING ACTIVITIES

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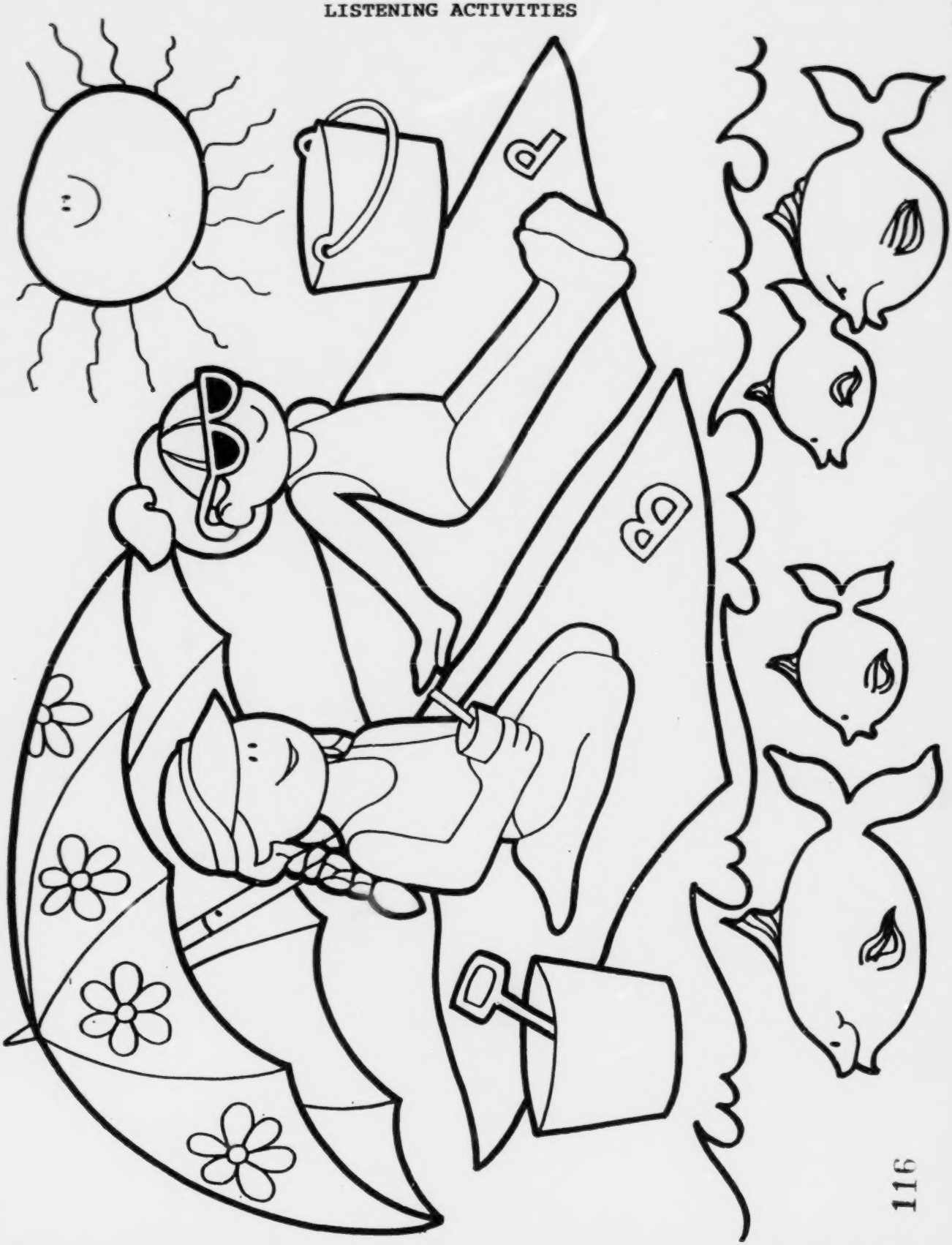
LISTENING ACTIVITIES



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Build a Robot

Look at the robot. He's missing a few things! Listen carefully to the sentences. Finish each sentence to make a rhyme. Then, draw a picture of the word you say on the *Build a Robot* activity sheet to finish your robot.

1. There's a lot to be said when you add this robot's _____.
2. He will look very grand if you add one _____.
3. It's hard for him to hear, so add one _____.
4. I won't tell you why, but add one _____.
5. This is the thing he blows, so add his _____.
6. He'll tap to the beat when you add his _____.
7. Things will be clear if you add his other _____.
8. Look north, look south, then add his _____.
9. He could be the drummer in the band if you add his other _____.
10. The robot won't cry if you add his other _____.
11. Now he can do his jobs, if you add his _____.

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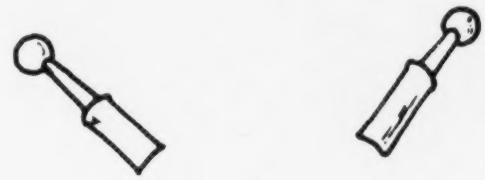
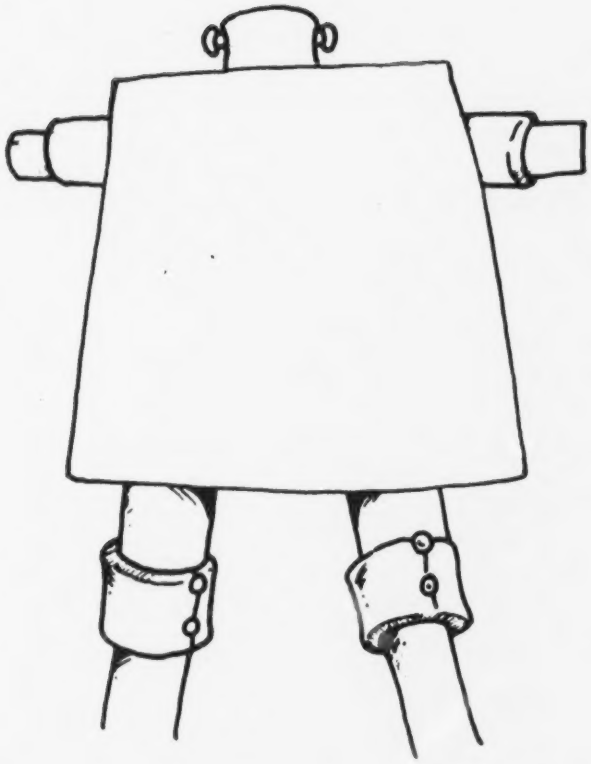
Build a Robot

Listen carefully to each sentence. Finish the sentence to make a rhyme. Then, draw a picture of the rhyming word on your robot. Doesn't he look better?





What are some things a robot could do that a person couldn't do?

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Appendix F

CLASSROOM SETUP FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Social Rules

1. Respect other people and their property.
2. Be fair and considerate.
3. Always be honest.
4. Be responsible for your words and actions.

Name _____

Using an "I Message"

Problem: _____

_____

_____

"I Message":

I feel: _____

_____

When: _____

_____

I would like: _____

_____

Name _____

Using an "I Message"

Problem: _____

_____

_____

"I Message":

I feel: _____

_____

When: _____

_____

I would like: _____

_____

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Classroom Pledge

I promise to myself and everyone in this classroom, that I will show respect by treating others the way I would like to be treated.

I will choose to follow the classroom rules for getting along together because I want to help make my school a safe and caring place.

We pledge as a class to do our best to cooperate with each other.

TEACHER AND STUDENT SIGNATURES

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Compliments for You and Me

I like you.

You look nice.

I'm glad we're friends.

I like working with you.

You're fun.

I'd like to get to know you better.

You're a good buddy.

Congratulations for...

Thank you for sharing...

I like the way you look.

You're super at...

I'm glad we're friends.

I wish you a wonderful day.

Thank you for teaching me something new today.

I appreciate your help.

Thanks for including me.

You are a kind person.

You're funny.

It's nice to see you in school every day.

You are dependable.

You're a great listener.

You are very creative.

I like it when you...

I'm happy to know you.

Good job.

I'm proud of you because...

You are special...

I like it when you smile...

You're my special friend.

I'm glad you are in our class.

You are a caring person.

You are very helpful.

I enjoy being with you.

How nice of you to do that.

I think you are terrific.

I hope you do well. You deserve it.

You give the best compliments.

I especially appreciated it when you...

I'm glad you're in my group.

You're fun to know.

Your clothes look great!

I feel good when I'm with you.

You made me laugh.

I like to sit with you.

You are a great friend.

I like playing with you.

You're a good buddy.

I like your...

I'm glad I know you.

You are so smart.

I like the way you...

You look very nice.

You are a great helper.

I appreciate your help.

You're so good in sports.

You're the best!

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To: _____

From: _____

You Deserve a Compliment!

To: _____

From: _____

You Deserve a Compliment!

To: _____

From: _____

You Deserve a Compliment!

To: _____

From: _____

You Deserve a Compliment!

Teaching Students To Get Along
© Lee Canter & Associates

These Are My Feelings

excited	important	funny
sad	concerned	hungry
lonely	tired	gentle
sorry	grief	confident
frightened	left out	furious
hurt	impatient	embarrassed
silly	content	surprised
confused	caring	ashamed
quiet	cool	anxious
jealous	strong	worried
angry	loud	frustrated
disappointed	sassy	hopeless
nervous	upset	loving
proud	bored	humiliated
happy	unimportant	alone
loved	weak	suspicious
energetic	joyful	annoyed

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Appendix I

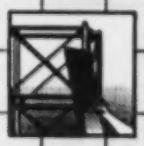
CLASSROOM SETUP FOR COOPERATION SKILLS

Cooperation Rules

1. Use inside voices.
2. Listen to partners or group members.
3. Stay with the group.
4. Look at the speaker.
5. Don't hurt feelings.

Blueprint:

SECONDARY SCHOOL LESSON



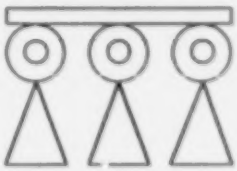
SETTING UP THE SCAFFOLDING

WORKING THE CREW

DRAW THIS

To focus on attentive listening, divide the class into group A and group B.

Give each A the following instruction sheet and a sketch of a figure.

> Your task is to describe the assigned figure to your partner. Your partner must sit back-to-back with you and may not (a) see your sketch, or (b) talk with you. Your partner must reproduce your sketch using your instructions. You will have five minutes.
>
> 
>
> Partner A-1*

Give each B the following instruction sheet.

> Your task is to sketch a figure as instructed by your partner. You may not talk to your partner or see the original. You will have five minutes.
>
> Partner B-1*

Match partners by counting off 1, 2, 1, 2 . . . .

Monitor the groups for five minutes. If more time is needed, give it.

Reverse the roles. Give the A's the instructions:

> You may not see the sketch. You may ask clarifying questions about the instructions and discuss how you are sketching.
>
> Partner A-2*

Move around the room and note the students' behavior. Be aware of genuine misbehavior in students, especially during these times in which interpersonal skills and social behavior are the focus. Be aware of "the kid who..." seeks attention, feels inadequate, makes the power play, is looking for revenge or shows signs of emotional disturbances. When a misbehaving student exhibits a deficit in a social skill, review the strategies presented earlier in this chapter and take time to address the social skill with clear, directed and effective action.

Even better, in the "Non-listening" lesson activity you have asked students to deliberately demonstrate poor listening skills. Now, take advantage of this activity. Find the student who takes over the partner interview as the dialogue becomes very one-sided. This is the teachable moment to address the question, **"What do you do with the kid who...*takes over*?"**

Looking back at the suggested strategies listed earlier in the chapter, *moving this student into a leadership role* seems to be an applicable strategy for this situation. For example, in the midst of this partner interaction, tell the class to "freeze frame." Suggest that to reinforce the roles of each partner, one pair will model or role play an interaction. Select the pair with the partner who has "taken over" and have them model the desired actions. Surprisingly, the misbehavior disappears instantly and the desired behavior is modeled in true leadership style. However, since the non-listening activity is intentionally set up to focus on misbehavior, this "power play" might be tried by others.

By designating a leadership role for the "offender" in front of the class, the "power play" in the small group is no longer as interesting to the misbehaving student. So be sure to highlight the reason the strategy of *giving a leadership role* works. In addition, this same student has actually modeled the very behavior he/she was lacking. Although this may be simple classroom management, by addressing this incident within the context of social skill instruction, the teacher adds power to the situation with positive reinforcement. She/he also can talk about the incident or use the groups' reflection time to lead discussion on the idea of power plays as taking over the group.

After two minutes, stop the activity. Have each pair shake hands, with the B's apologizing to the A's.

For affective processing, conclude with a discussion of the positive effects on a speaker and a listener when attention goes both ways.

To process the social skill of listening, have students describe a TV character who is a good listener.

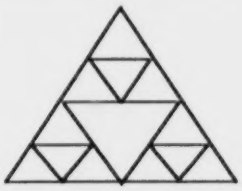
To process cognitively, put a double T-chart for non-listening on the board. What did non-listening look like, sound like and feel like?

For metacognitve processing, discuss with the class instances when they may have experienced the same negative feelings caused by non-listening.

REFLECTING ON THE DESIGN

Give each B the new sketch and these instructions:

> You may not show this sketch to your partner. You may answer your partner's questions about your instructions. You have five minutes.
>
> Partner B-2*



Be aware of all the students' social skills during this time in which interpersonal skills and social behavior are on focus. Be aware of "the kid who..." seeks attention, feels inadequate, makes the power play, is looking for revenge or shows signs of emotional disturbances. When a student exhibits a deficit in a social skill, review the strategies presented earlier in this chapter and take time to address the social skill with clear, directed and effective action. For example, if during the "Draw This" lesson, a student shows signs of *feeling inadequate*—lack of eye contact, fear, whispered "I don't know," "I can't," or other closing-up behaviors—take advantage of the moment to answer the question, **"What do you do with the kid who ...** *feels inadequate?"*

Looking back at the suggested strategies listed earlier in this chapter, *reminding the student of past successes and cueing for what can be done to ensure another success* seems like the most effective strategy to choose. For example, as the students proceed with their descriptions, one student drawer is making very tentative marks in response to the directions given. As facilitator, the teacher notices that the tentativeness is persisting throughout the interaction. The teacher moves near the student who is feeling inadequate and mentions a previous incident in which that student succeeded: "Remember how well you did when you had to memorize that poem? Think of what you did to remember it so accurately. Try to do those same things now as you try to reproduce the drawing being described. Keep in mind it's supposed to be fun. You will not be graded on the *drawing*. We're concentrating on *how to listen attentively*."

Reflecting on the Design

By reassuring the student who feels inadequate, the teacher successfully uses this opportunity to extend one student's confidence in a social situation. Success breeds success so the more frequently this student feels good about an achievement, the more likely he/she will develop socially.

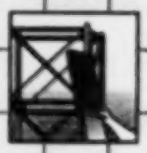
For affective processing, ask students what they do when they are feeling unsure about things.

For social skill processing, have students describe an incident in which they paid the consequences for *not* listening.

For cognitive processing, list on the board or overhead students' ideas for (a) what was easy to do, and (b) what was difficult in the task.

For metacognitive processing, discuss with the class what they have learned from doing this task. Where could the use this information? How would it help?

BLUEPRINT:
SECONDARY SCHOOL LESSON



SETTING UP SCAFFOLDING

TEAMWORK

Introduce students to the teamwork norm for their classroom.

Ask the students to share examples of teamwork with which they are familiar (sports teams, business teams, etc.). Ask individuals to offer situations in which teamwork is beneficial.

On the board, sketch this double T-chart.

TEAMWORK		
LOOKS LIKE	SOUNDS LIKE	FEELS LIKE

Ask students to give specific examples for each column.

WORKING THE CREW

"Think-Pair-Share"

INFORMAL TASK GROUP SAMPLES

Think-Pair-Share

The *Think-Pair-Share* rehearsal strategy can be used:

✓ after a lecture, to help students summarize key points,

✓ to begin a new topic or unit by having students discuss prior knowledge,

✓ to stimulate student thinking about an important piece of information,

✓ to check students' understanding of or insight into a topic,

✓ to bring closure to a lesson,

✓ to deepen students' short-term memories, or

✓ to promote student transfer of a concept.

With each of these uses of the think-pair-share strategy, give similar instructions:

Before the lecturette. "Today, I am going to describe (topic). After I define each term, I'm going to ask you to _____ with a partner." To fill in the second blank in this statement, select one of the following: (a) summarize the key points, (b) tell what you already know about the topic, (c) pick one idea of importance to you and explain it, (d) tell how the information is important to you, or (e) tell something new you learned about the topic. After 10-20 seconds, sample student ideas for the whole class.

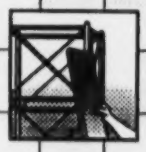
After the lecturette (or at appropriate times during a longer lecture). "Turn to the person on your (right/left side), and take turns (see a-e above). Allow about (two or three minutes) for each person to share."

Explain Why

Explain Why enables students to rehearse their reasons for selecting an answer. Before a lesson, ask students three to five multiple-choice questions. After each question is answered, invite several students to explain *why* they selected those answers. Solicit several answers to each question and write them on the board. Tell the class it will discover the correct answers as it studies the lesson.

BLUEPRINT:
SECONDARY SCHOOL LESSON

TORN CIRCLES



SETTING UP THE SCAFFOLDING

On the board or on a transparency, write the words that describe the three types of interaction.

Cooperative: when two or more people work together toward a single goal (e.g., football players, airplane crew)

Competitive: when one or more persons work against each other toward a single goal (e.g., two football teams try to win the game, race car drivers try to win a race)

Individualistic: when one person works alone to reach a goal (e.g., a mountain climber, a house painter)

Elicit definitions of the words from students with sports examples of the three types of interactions:

Cooperation: seesaw, leap frog

Competition: Olympic, tug of war

Individualism: swimming, tight-rope walking

Divide the class into teams of three and assign the roles:

Material's manager:	Gets the stuff
Reporter:	Gives report
Observer:	Talks about feelings

WORKING THE CREW

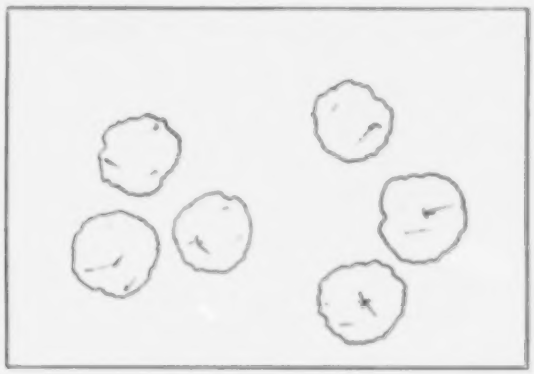
Explain that the Torn Circles activity is used as a quick, but graphically concrete example of the three types of social interactions. Suggest that as the students sample the three distinct interactions, they are to focus on how they *feel.*

Competitive Task

Instruct students to *each,* by themselves, take a sheet of scratch paper (gathered by the material's manager) and tear a circle. The goal is to tear the roundest circle in the group. Reiterate, "The winning circle will be judged by others for *roundness.*"

Once the individuals complete the task, instruct them to select the "best" circle in their groups of threes.

Once the "winner" from each group is selected, have each side of the room select the three roundest circles.



With the six finalists, have the students place their circles on the overhead projector and, using a pseudo "applause meter," judge the *best* circle in the room. (First-place, second-place and third-place winners may be picked.)

Once the competition is over, have students, in their groups of three, describe how they are feeling. Have the reporters sample the feelings experienced by the groups. Gather a list of words that describe their feelings on the competitive tasks. For example, competition makes one feel:

anxious

stupid

angry

nervous

Individualistic Task

Instruct students that again, they are to individually tear shapes. However, this time the torn circles must *meet this criteria*:

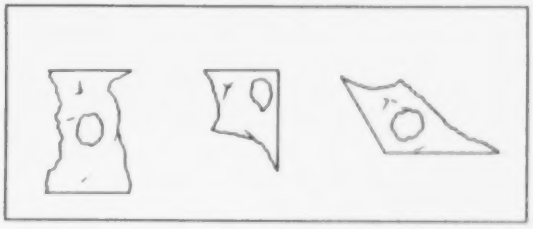
two straight sides

two curves

a hole

Any and all torn circles that meet the criteria earn a 100 percent grade for the participants.

Torn circles for the individualistic task might include figures that look like this:



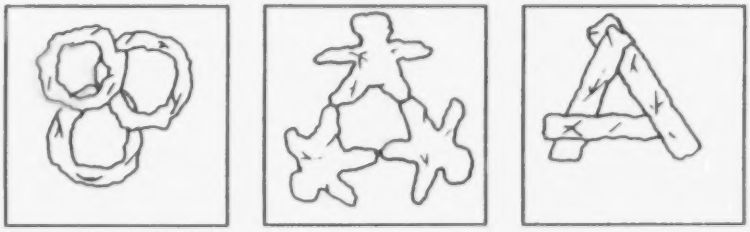
Again, talk about how students felt during this interaction. Gather words that describe their feelings when trying to meet individual *criteria* (e.g., successful, non-threatened, satisfied, a winner).

Cooperative task

Instruct students that in this last interaction they are to each contribute a piece for a final collage comprised of three pieces. The final collage design is to symbolize cooperation.

To reiterate, have each student trio design a collage that symbolizes cooperation using the group's three torn pieces.

Samples of Collage Designs: Cooperation



Again, process the feelings experienced by students as they cooperatively completed this "torn circles" task. Gather words that describe their feelings (e.g., supported, teamwork, pride, trust).

IN THE COOPERATIVE CLASSROOM

FORMING 1 *Basic*

Through the interaction, the focus is on the affective or feelings level. Take time to compare and contrast the three lists of words describing the different feelings students had during the activities.

To process socially, ask students to describe a social situation in which someone acted inappropriately.

To process cognitively, check that students understand the three types of interactions. Ask students to role play in groups of six these three words: *competitive, individualistic, cooperative.*

Finally, to lead students to metacognitively transfer the concepts beyond this one situation, direct each student to make an entry in his/her log (the log is a notebook of ideas, thoughts, notes, etc. for them to refer to and add to throughout the year). Have them complete one of the following lead-ins:

Cooperation is like _____ because both _____.

Competition differs from cooperation because _____.

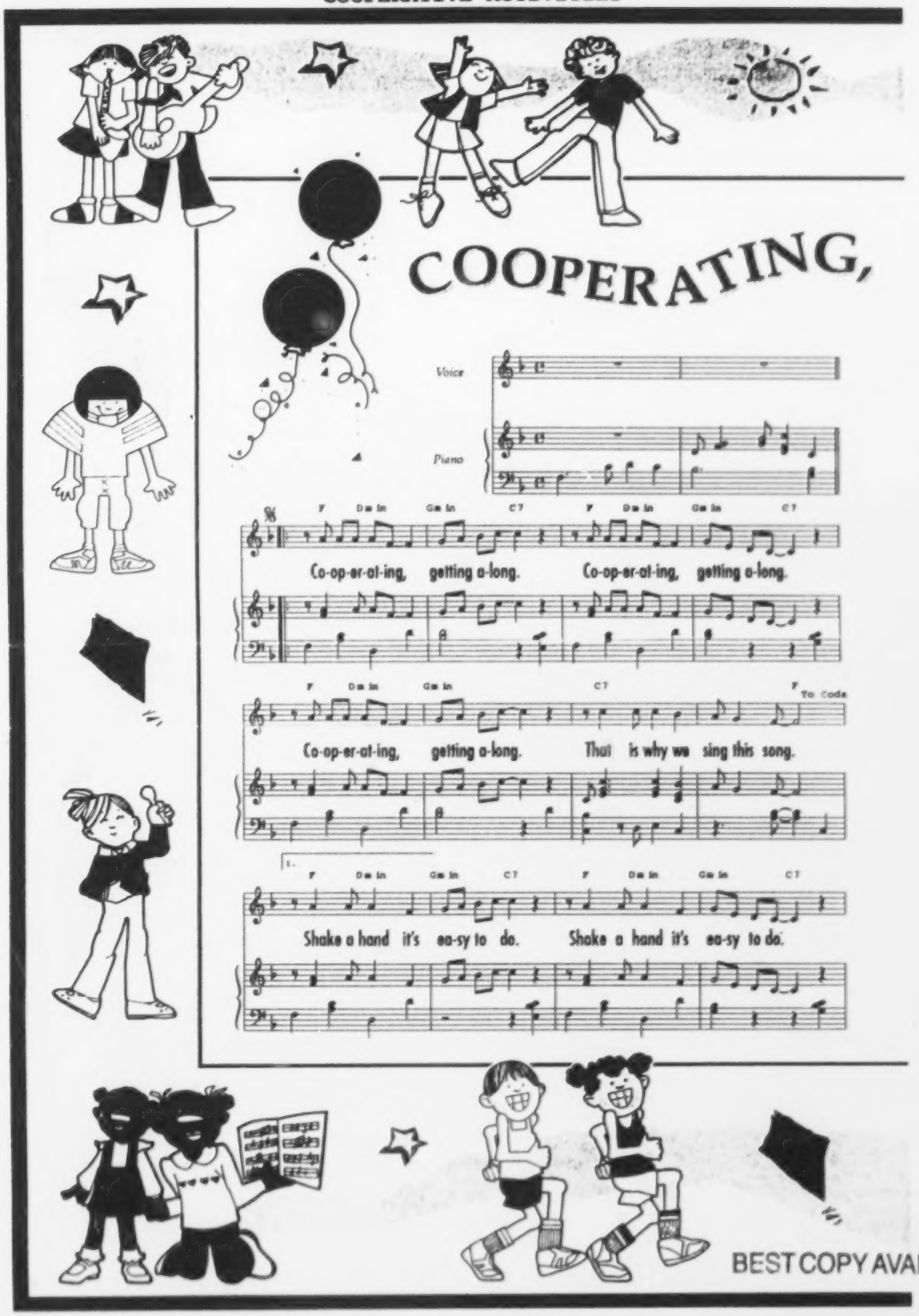
The hardest part about cooperating is _____.

□ □ □

Reflecting on the Design

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES



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TUG O'WAR THINKING CREED

We pledge to...

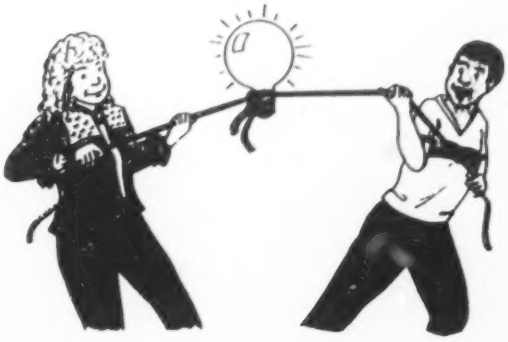
Tug at ideas, not people.

Examine all sides of the issue.

Actively listen and clarify.

Modify our position when appropriate.

Seek the best decision,
not the winning position.

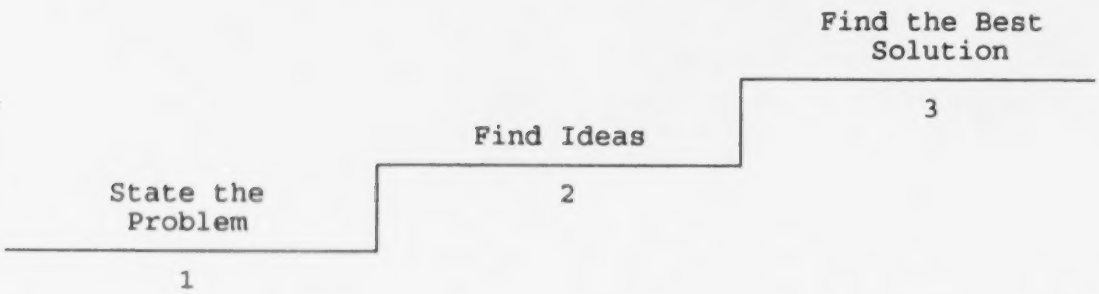


SKYLIGHT PUBLISHING

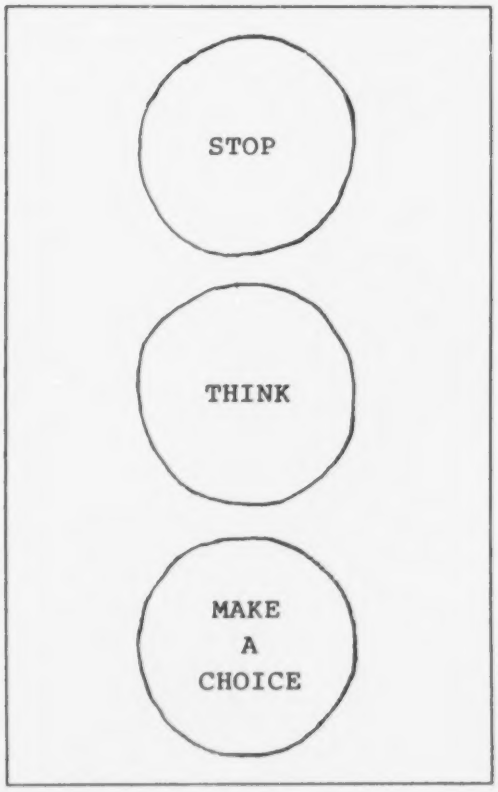
Appendix K

CLASSROOM SETUP FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS

Problem-Solving Steps



Problem-Solving Traffic Sign



Conflict Resolution Puzzle - All Levels

SELL TALK INTO	VOTE MOST WINS	STALL WAIT	ARGUE FIGHT
GIVE IN QUIT	LEAD JUDGE	GIVE & TAKE AGREE	GIVE A LITTLE BOTH GIVE SOME

SKYLIGHT PUBLISHING

Conflict Resolution Puzzles - All Levels

AVOID IGNORE	HUMOR JOKE	ARGUE FIGHT	TAKE TIME OUT WAIT
BOTH GIVE SOME COMPROMISE	SELL CONVINCE	GIVE UP QUIT	GIVE & TAKE AGREE

SKYLIGHT PUBLISHING